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RAISING THE SWORD AND ANCHOR OVER HIS HEAD. KOSTA MOVED HIS LIPS AS IF UTTERING A VOW.

The Ocean Gipsy;

OR,
CRUISER KOSTA'S HUNT-DOWN

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TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIPSY RIVALS.

"The King of the Gypsies is dead!"

Like a chant the words ascended from the lips of the one who uttered them as he passed slowly along through the picturesque village of a stranger people.

They were known as "Sea Gypsies," and their dwelling-place was wherever they chose to pitch their camp, though never away from where the roar of the surf could be heard did they go, for their home was as much upon blue water as upon the shore.

A weird, wild people they were, the descendants of pirates it was said, and they were shunned and feared by honest sailors, who were wont to see their fleet, small craft flying over the waters of the Gulf and Southern seas.

At the time of which I write the home of the Gipsy Rovers was upon an island off the coast of Florida.

A rugged reef isle they had made into a garden spot, and, secure in their retreat, owing allegiance to no flag but their own, a weird people, they dwelt there, perhaps a thousand souls in all.

They carried sponges, shells and fish to the Gulf, Southern Atlantic and West Indian markets; their women wove baskets and made odd trinkets of shells, and such was their only source of income, *they said*; but there were those who asserted that they were freebooters, and wreckers, and that many a vessel announced as "lost at sea," could be accounted for by the Island Gypsies.

Still, though they had been watched by Spanish, English, and American cruisers, they had never been caught in lawless acts.

Their chief they called their king, and the Autocrat of Russia had not the power over his subjects that this Gipsy king had over his people, for his command was law—his displeasure was as fatal as death.

Americans they claimed to be, because their island was on the coast of America; but those who saw them would have said they were of Spanish origin, mixed with Indian blood, and also with Mexican.

A handsome race they were, the men tall, broad-shouldered, straight as soldiers, with clean-cut features, and a recklessness of expression natural to them, while their faces were darkly bronzed.

The women were slender, graceful and beautiful, with glorious eyes and raven hair, with but an occasional exception.

Their "king," at his death, was an old man and revered by all. His hair and beard were snow-white, he having lived to threescore.

He had not married a daughter of his race, but had sailed away one day in his fleet little schooner, the Wind Chaser, and had returned with a fair young bride.

Who she was none of his people knew, or, knowing, did not tell.

She was very beautiful, fair as a lily, and sad-faced, as though her lot was not a happy one.

One day she died, leaving two little twin baby boys, and, against the custom of his race, the king had her buried on land, in an island key not far away, though the dead of the Gypsies always found a resting-place in the sea.

And these two boys grew up to manhood loved by all, and idolized by their father, who, dying, and unable to decide who should rule the band, left it to be decided between them after his death.

The most skilled swordsman, the deadliest shot, the most daring swimmer, the best sailor of his two sons should be the king, and the trials should take place before all of the tribe, as soon as he was dead, and his body must not be buried until the tests told which was to be the ruler of the Sea Gypsies.

The two brothers were alike and not alike, for one had taken after the fair-faced mother, and was blue-eyed, blonde-haired and fairer in complexion, while the other was dark-faced, like his father, had fiery black eyes and ebon locks.

But in feature they were alike, in form one was the counterpart of the other.

Magnificent specimens of manhood they certainly were, and the Gipsy king had put them under a severe course of study of all manly sports and endeavored to make them worthy inheritors of the legacy he would leave.

Each had commanded his own vessel, and they had gone on voyages to the West Indies and Mexico, to the American Gulf and Atlantic ports, and both were known to be skilled mariners.

They had seemed to love each other devotedly, and when at last their father died, leaving the

strange command that the one that proved himself the truest man should be king, one of the two went forth from his cabin and sought the home of the other, the chant ringing in his ears as he wended his way through the village:

"The Gipsy king is dead—
Long live his heir, whoever he be!"

The village of the Sea Gypsies was a beautiful spot in which to dwell, for flowers bloomed upon all sides, tall trees sheltered the island from the sun's rays, and half a hundred neat cabins were scattered about here and there in picturesque confusion.

There was a snug little harbor, sheltered by two points of land, wooded heavily and hiding the score of rakish craft at anchor therein, while to run in and out through the reefs required a brave heart and a nifty hand upon the tiller, for the Sea Gypsies wished no visitors, and hence lived where none could come without their aid, for a network of rocks surrounded their island home, and but one channel approached it.

The king's cottage was a pretty structure, one story high, and with but four rooms, two on either side of a wide hallway.

In that hallway, in a coffin weighted with shells, he lay, and to his side walked the son, Kosta, who was the image of his mother.

His brother Lindo paced to and fro in the hallway, alone with the dead, for none but the two sons were allowed to stand guard over the dead, and when neither was present the corpse was left in solitude.

As he reached the hallway Kosta removed his hat and bent low, as though in reverence to the dead.

He was very pale, and walking up to where his brother paced to and fro, confronted him.

The other stopped and gazed into his face, and there was anger rather than sadness in the look.

"Lindo, I have come to talk with you, here by the side of our dead father," said Kosta, quietly.

"Well, Kosta, what is there to say?"

"I like not this strange will of our father, peace be to his ashes, for it arrays you and I as rivals to each other."

"Our father's word is law on this island, Kosta, and you have no right to utter a word against his will," sternly responded Lindo.

"Brother, I would only say that I will withdraw from the demand, in favor of you, leaving you King of the Sea Gypsies."

The eyes of Lindo flashed at these words, and his face flushed; but he said calmly:

"Kosta, you have no power to withdraw, and I will not accept your offer. Our father's will commands that his successor shall be the better man of his two sons, you and I."

"The test must be made, before this body can be buried; so may the best man rule!"

"And should I be the one, Lindo, to become king?"

"I will at once leave the island."

"No Gipsy can do this, for you know the penalty is death for one of our people to desert his tribe."

"I will be king, or I will depart."

"Then, why not do as I ask, and let me yield in your favor?"

"And you?"

The face of Kosta flushed, but he said, after a moment of hesitation:

"I would also leave, Lindo, though for a time only."

"No, we are rivals, and the victor must become king, ay, and the king shall marry the fair Carriza, for you love her, as I do, and she can only marry the one who rules the Sea Gypsies."

Again the face of Kosta flushed, and he dropped his eyes for an instant.

Then he said:

"Lindo, I will not meet you in the test for the inheritance of our father."

"Coward! can it be that your craven blood flows in my veins?"

His brother started, his face became pallid, and his eyes burned as they rested upon the face of Lindo.

Then the young sailor laid his hand upon his father's coffin and said:

"Brother, I will meet you and the victor shall be King of the Sea Gypsies!"

CHAPTER II.

THE GIPSY KING'S COMMAND.

It may have been because Lindo most resembled his father and his people that he was the favorite of the Gypsies, but so he seemed, at least among the young men of the band.

It was known that the two brothers were skilled swordsmen, that they swam better than any others of the tribe, were dead shots with rifle and pistol, and were fearless navigators of the sea; but which was the superior no one knew, for never would Kosta cross blades or compete with his brother in any sport.

Now when the command of the king was to be obeyed great interest was felt by all in the coming trials of pluck, endurance and skill between the brothers, and predictions ran high that Lindo would be the victor.

There was a law among this strange people

that if one demurred at a command of their king, be it ever so slight, he would have to suffer any penalty the ruler chose to inflict, and this was the power which held the Island Gypsies together as in a band of steel.

When the hour appointed for the first trials came the people all assembled in front of the royal cottage and seated themselves in two rows.

The crews of the respective brothers were to be their seconds, and soon they were seen advancing and bearing with them the weapons of their captains.

Lindo now advanced at a quick step from his cabin, and took his position at one end of the lines, amid a breathless silence, for with their king lying dead the Gypsies uttered no cheer for his sons.

A few moments more and Kosta approached from his cabin and took his stand, raising his hat politely to his brother, a salute that was returned with the same courtesy.

Kosta was pale, strangely so it seemed when contrasted with his brother's dark face and with the countenances of those about him.

The targets were set, for both rifle and pistol, and the weapons were ready.

The rifles were first handed to the two brothers, and the target a hundred yards away was to be used, each having but one shot.

They drew for first shot and Lindo won.

He raised his weapon, quickly aimed at the bull's-eye, the size of a coconut and fired.

No applause greeted the shot, though the bullet was not far from dead center.

Then Kosta's turn came, and, glancing over among the Gypsies he gave a call.

Instantly from the crowd came a young girl.

Scarcely over seventeen, she was very lovely in face, exquisitely molded in form, and her attire was a pretty feminine sailor garb, ornamented with shells and beads.

Kosta tossed her an orange as she advanced, and catching it, she smiled and walked toward the target amid a breathless silence.

Reaching it she turned, faced the brothers, and placed the orange upon her head.

"Stay! what would you do, Kosta?" cried Lindo, as he saw his brother slowly raising his rifle.

"I would use the orange on Carriza's head for my target," was the reply.

"I forbid it."

"Brother Lindo, the king lies yonder in his coffin, and you have not proven yet that you are to rule, so you can forbid me nothing yet," was the quiet response.

Lindo muttered something inaudible to those around, and Kosta, raising his rifle, with remarkable quickness fired.

A murmur arose on all sides, as the orange was seen to fly in fragments, while, picking up the riven rind, Carriza came back toward the brothers, a smile upon her beautiful face.

Lindo evidently was angry at his brother's triumph in the first test, and grasped his pistol with a nervous gesture.

The pistol-target was now placed in position, and Lindo fired, sending a bullet to dead center, and looking at his brother with a glance of triumph.

Taking a small sea-shell from his pocket, Kosta tossed it into the air and his bullet shivered it to atoms, and again that low murmur of applause arose.

Then the swords were placed in the brothers' hands, and they faced each other for the combat—the one who disarmed the other to be declared the victor.

Lindo's face was stern, his brow clouded, and a forced smile hovered upon his lips.

His hard grip on his sword-hilt seemed to indicate that he wished the combat were to be in deadly earnest, for life or death.

Kosta was calm, seemingly almost indifferent, though his face still wore that look of pallor, as though he dreaded the result.

The blades crossed, an instant were held thus, and then, like fiery serpents, writhed in the air.

But only for an instant, for then one was tossed high above their heads!

It was Lindo's blade, and as it came down it was cleverly caught and handed to him by Kosta.

Then Lindo showed ill-temper, for he broke the blade and threw the pieces upon the ground.

But two tests more now remained—those of seamanship and swimming.

The former was to be tested in a storm, when the gantlet was to be to run out and into the island harbor through the deadly channel.

The latter was to test the endurance of the two in a swim to the little key where their mother was buried.

Upon her grave had been placed, at the king's command, a package addressed simply:

"To My Son."

The one who swam to that key and secured the package, was to be its possessor, and doubtless the king in his father's place.

As the key was nearly three leagues distant the test was a severe one.

The "weather-wise" old Gipsies predicted a hurricane for that night, so there would be little delay in waiting for the carrying out of the seamanship tests, while the swim to the island could take place at once.

Stripped for the struggle the brothers entered the harbor and boldly struck out for the distant isle, while a sharp-bowed little schooner followed them to keep near to succor one or both, should aid be needed.

CHAPTER III. THE VICTOR.

THE Sea Gipsies all swam like fish, so to speak, and yet the course to the key, on which was their mother's grave, they knew was a fearful ordeal to pass through, and few believed that either of the brothers would make it.

But both started out with the air of men who meant to do or die.

Through the channel they passed, where, at all times, the sea beating upon the reefs, was rough and dangerous, and then out into the blue waters of the Gulf.

It was in the afternoon, and the sky was becoming overcast with clouds, while the sea was rough with capped waves.

Through the channel the brothers had kept side by side; but, once out in clear water, where no reefs surrounded them, one of them began to draw ahead.

It was Kosta. Steadily he drew away from his brother, until ere the distance was two-thirds done, it could be seen that he would win in the swimming combat, for though he now and then allowed Lindo to gain upon him, it was merely because he did not care to keep so far away.

A cry from Lindo suddenly caused him to look back.

His brother had disappeared, and the little vessel was some distance off.

With herculean strokes Kosta returned toward where he had last seen his brother, while he hailed the vessel to warn those on board of Lindo's peril.

Soon Lindo arose from beneath the waters, and struggled manfully, but again he sunk.

Again he arose to the surface, and once more fought for life.

But he was going down to his death when Kosta grasped him.

"All right, Lindo; I can save you," said Kosta, and his brother became unconscious in his arms.

On came the schooner, and soon after ran near, and Kosta called out:

"Take my brother on board, for he has been seized with cramp."

Lindo was raised in the strong arms of the crew, and one of them asked of Kosta:

"And you, sir?"

"I shall swim on to the island to win or lose," was the determined reply.

"You have had a hard struggle in saving your brother, sir, and had best come on board," said the man.

"No, it is sink or swim with me. I shall go on."

"A storm is rising, sir."

"It matters not."

Then Lindo opened his eyes, and his words proved that he had heard what his brother said.

"Let him go, if he is to win. I am suffering, so put back to the island with me."

It was a heartless command, and the men on the vessel seemed surprised, but Kosta only answered:

"Do as my brother commands you. I shall go alone."

There was a defiant smile upon his face as he swam on his way, leaving the vessel rocking upon the rough waters.

Once he glanced back to see that the little craft was again under way, and she was running back to the island.

The gallant Sea Gipsy was left alone upon the sea.

But the stout heart of the bold swimmer did not fail him, and he held on his way toward the little island.

The winds increased in fury, and the sea began to grow very wild, while he had to face the elements and curling waves; but he never faltered; he seemed not to tire; on he went, diving through the huge waves, and with a powerful stroke forcing himself on his way.

At last he got up under the lee of the little island and swam with ease to the shore, staggering out upon the sands, tired out, but triumphant.

There were plenty of trees upon the island, which was hardly more than three acres in size, and in the midst of these was the grave of his mother.

It had a monument of shells, and kneeling by its side he bowed his head with awe and remorse.

Then he took from a large shell the little package for which he had risked his life, and hung it about his neck by the silken cord attached.

Once more he bent his head with respect toward the grave, and turning walked back to the shore.

A small flask which he carried, swung to his belt, he raised to his lips, and then bent his gaze toward the distant Gipsy Isle.

The wind was blowing a gale now, and the waves were lashed into fury; but both winds and waves set toward the Gipsy Island, and he said, in a determined way:

"He never thought I could make the key, but I will still prove my claim to be king by swimming back again."

So saying he boldly waded into the sea and once more started upon his long and perilous swim.

The waves and wind carried him along at a terrific pace, and the spray so blinded him that he had great difficulty in keeping his eye fixed upon the distant island; but he kept his bearings until darkness fell upon the sea; then he hoped the harbor light would gleam forth to guide him.

"Strange that they do not light the beacon," he thought.

But no light shone over the waters, and he began to give up all hope, when a sudden flash of lightning distinctly revealed the Gipsy Island.

"Saved!" he instinctively cried, aloud, and, guided by the vivid flashes, he entered the tempestuous waters of the channel.

Buffeted about, often nearly dashed upon the ragged reefs, worn out and suffering, he at last reached the haven and hardly had strength enough to totter ashore.

But he was nerved by the determined heart within him, and he bore up and reached his cabin.

Making a hasty toilet he sought his people, all gathered in the plaza fronting the royal cottage.

Pine torches flared upon a strange scene, for the Gipsies were all there, and he beheld his brother, standing at the head of his father's coffin, upholding in one hand a gold anchor, and in the other a drawn sword, and repeating the oath taken by a Gipsy king before entering upon his duties as such.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATAL RESEMBLANCE.

THE sight that met the gaze of Kosta, the victor in the tests, fairly appalled him.

He had offered, without a trial, to relinquish all claim to the rulership of the Sea Gipsies, and his brother had refused.

Called a coward by that brother, whom he had so dearly loved, he had at once determined to become victor by right of his superiority in the contests, and so he had set to work to win.

Left by his brother, to reach the island, or die, he had struggled on and conquered, but now returned to find his brother taking the oath that would make him chief of the band!

He had known that his mother had never been liked by the Gipsies, as she was a daughter of another people, and often, as a boy, he had heard things said against him on account of his resemblance to her, while Lindo was praised as being "every inch a Gipsy" in looks—yes, and in ways, too.

Ever courteous and kind to all, Kosta had won his way, as he grew older, to the hearts of his people, and the crew of his little vessel, half a hundred in number, fairly idolized him.

Haughty and overbearing, Lindo had not been so popular; but, prejudice was everything, and he was preferred on account of his Gipsy looks, let his faults be what they might.

But, when his brother, whose life he had saved when drowning, and who had left him to perish, unless he could reach the island, and whom he had defeated fairly in every contest, deliberately returned to the island to take the oath as king, it was more than Kosta would bear.

Walking boldly forward Kosta cried:

"Brother, do not dare commit crime over the dead body of your father, for I am, by every right, King of the Sea Gipsies!"

The Gipsies sprung to their feet in alarm and terror, and the brother, faced by one whom he believed, and hoped, was at the bottom of the sea, recoiled before him.

But Lindo had just uttered the last words of the oath, as Kosta had confronted him, and recovering himself quickly he said sternly:

"What? Do you dare so address your king?"

"You are not king, brother, by any law that makes you so," was the stern response.

"What! do you defy me? Ho, Gipsies, who rules here—my brother or I?"

In a deep, ominous chorus came reply:

"Long live Lindo, the King of the Sea Gipsies!"

Kosta stood like one in a dream, his eyes looking over the faces turned toward him, his tongue unable to give utterance to what it would say.

"Hark you, brother, you have heard, and my first act shall be to pardon you for trying to break the laws of our race."

"Pardon me? I throw back your pardon in your teeth, Lindo, for I have done no wrong. You are the guilty one, not I, and no longer will I wear the infamous name of Gipsy."

A wild cry of anger went up at these bold

words, and then came the stern command of the newly self-made king:

"Seize and bind that man!"

A dozen powerful men sprung toward him, and offering no resistance, for he seemed dazed, Kosta was seized and bound.

"Now strip him to the waist, get the cat-whip and lash him thirty blows!"

Kosta started at the command, and asked in a tone that was pleading:

"Lindo, you have the power, but will you put this cruel shame upon me, your twin brother?"

"I will! Obey my command!"

The sailor jacket which Kosta had put on in his cabin, and the shirt were stripped from him, his back was bared, and the lash was about to fall, when he said:

"I ask at least to be unbound, for I pledge my word to offer no resistance."

"Unbind him!" came the stern command from Lindo.

Folding his arms upon his massive heart, Kosta said, while every eye was upon him:

"I am ready to take the shameful punishment my brother inflicts upon me before you, my people."

"Hold!"

The word rung out in a clear voice and stayed the hand of the brawny Gipsy who held the cat-whip, which was a cruel cat-o'-nine-tails.

Then there bounded forward into the glare of the torches the form of a maiden, and holding in her hand a package, she cried:

"See! Kosta secured the package from the Grave Isle, and he, not Lindo, should be the King of the Sea Gipsies!"

Had a lightning-stroke from the storm-clouds above shivered the coffin of the dead king into atoms, the Gipsies could not have been more startled than they were at this bold act of the maiden.

It was the same young girl who had stepped forward and allowed Kosta to shoot the orange from her head.

"Carriza!" cried Lindo, in a voice that rung with anger.

"I hear you, Lindo, but heed you not. You came back with your vessel's crew and said that Kosta was drowned, but he has returned, and seeing him appear as he has, I knew he had been to his cabin, and I went there and found this package."

"It proves that he reached the island key and returned, in the teeth of this storm, and he was your victor in all the other trials, and now you would proclaim yourself king and cruelly have him lashed!"

"Lindo, you are a coward and unworthy to be king of our tribe."

Silent as the dead man in the coffin were all as the young girl spoke, and the face of Lindo was pallid; but upon his lips was a smile of defiance, and he said in response:

"Carriza, the sea is deep, and Gipsies have been sunk alive with weights to their feet ere this; so beware!"

"I do not fear you, Lindo."

"Hold, Carriza! Anger not my brother, for do you not see that he holds the hearts of our people, while I, resembling my poor dead mother, am not considered a true Gipsy? Speak, Gipsies, are not my words true as the heavens?"

"They are!"

The voices that uttered these words were ominous, and Kosta bowed his head and uttered no word, for he knew that his resemblance to his beautiful, lily-faced, blue-eyed mother was fatal to him among that dark-skinned race.

CHAPTER V.

THE SILENT VOW.

WITH flaming eyes Carriza gazed over the faces of her people, and a look of contempt rested upon her own; but, stepping forward, she threw the silk cord that held the leather-bound packet over the head of Kosta, and turning to his brother asked defiantly:

"Will you have him lashed now, with that sacred souvenir from his mother's grave hanging over his heart—a souvenir which you could not win, Lindo?"

"Carriza, how dare you?" shouted Lindo, and then turning to the man who held the lash he sternly ordered:

"Lay on the cat-whip, sir, for thirty blows!"

The lashes whizzed through the air and fell heavily upon the bared back of Kosta, the Sea Gipsy.

There was a shriek, but it came from the lips of Carriza.

As for Kosta, he never flinched beneath the blow, though great welts were raised upon the pure white skin.

Again fell the whip, and still the brave man did not move.

He had proven himself a victor in the contest against his brother, and he would prove himself still a man against his brutish cruelty.

As the third blow fell a number of men came forward. They were the crew of the little craft that Kosta commanded, and one of them, speaking for all, said:

"King Lindo, may we ask mercy for our captain?"

"No! He has insulted me by my dead fa-

ther's coffin, and my people have said that I should be their king. For this reason I acted, and he shall receive his just punishment."

The response came slowly, as from lips that could utter no word of mercy.

"We acknowledge you our king, sir; but we beg mercy for our beloved captain, your brother," urged the young Gipsy who had before spoken.

"I shall show no mercy, so say no more."

The men silently turned away, and still the blows fell heavily upon the bare back of the victor, he who had won the kingly right.

It was a weird, wild scene, there in that pine grove, with torches flaring, the Gipsies crouching about, stern-faced men, anxious-faced women and awe-stricken children.

The shell-studded coffin of the dead king, the usurper standing by it, one hand resting upon the gold anchor, the other grasping the sword.

Not a groan came from the set lips of the suffering man. Once or twice he swayed, as though about to fall, but quickly recovering himself he stood again firm as a rock.

Several times he raised his eyes and they rested upon the pleading face of Carriza, who, with clasped hand upheld toward his brother mutely beseeched for mercy for the brave man who bore his anguish and ignominy without a murmur.

Then again the eyes would fall upon the face of his brother, and a defiant smile would curl his lips.

One by one, yet nine in each one, the blows fell, until the back was striped with gashes and the blood trickled down upon the ground.

Still no murmur from Kosta, and even the stern Gipsy men turned their faces toward Lindo, wondering if there was no pity in his heart for his brother.

And women hid their faces in their scarfs, and children moaned and wailed, for they could see what suffering the brave, handsome young Gipsy Prince was suffering.

The storm-clouds above were as black as ink, the thunder fairly shook the island with its mighty peals, and the lightning was appalling, as though a just God was showing his anger at the crime of a brother against brother.

At last the executioner gave the last blow, while a sigh of relief broke from hundreds of lips.

Looking up into the face of his brother, Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, asked, sternly:

"Are you satisfied now, King Lindo?"

"Yes, but beware of the future," was the warning.

"Ay, and so say I, King Lindo—beware of the future!"

"Ha! a threat?"

But Kosta had already turned away, and with bold step was passing through the crowd.

Suddenly he stopped, walked up to the shell-studded coffin of his father, upon which his brother had now placed the sword and gold anchor.

Taking the sword in his right hand, the anchor in his left, and raising them over his head, the lips of Kosta, the wronged and dishonored Sea Gipsy, moved as if uttering a vow.

Then he replaced the blade and anchor, while every eye was upon him, and walked toward the harbor, the crowd falling silently away before him.

Reaching the shore he suddenly seized a light surf-skiff, ran it into the waves, and springing in grasped the oars.

"Ha! he would desert! Seize him, men, for the crime of desertion from our band is death!" cried Lindo, as the light skiff was headed out of the harbor.

CHAPTER VI.

CARRIZA, THE SEA GIPSIES' QUEEN.

WHEN Kosta walked away from the scene of his cruel punishment, toward the harbor shore, not one of the Sea Gipsies had an idea of what his intention was.

The little cabin where he dwelt was further along the harbor shore than any of the other homes, and it was supposed that he was going to it.

Many wondered he had not fallen under his fearful punishment, and there were not wanting those who felt a regret that Lindo had been allowed to usurp the place of king.

They remembered that, through all the contests, Kosta had been the victor; and more, that he had shown a noble nature in the dread ordeal through which he had passed.

So, alone, he walked away, and not until he had sprung into the little skiff and dashed boldly toward the channel did any one suspect his motive.

Then came the cry from Lindo, and the words that "death was the penalty for a Sea Gipsy to desert his band." From this decree there was no reprieve, not even from their king.

Lindo had seen his brother take that silent vow by the coffin of his father, and he had cowered with fear, for he had heard the ominous words:

"And you beware of the future!"

Having begun to fear his brother, Lindo wished him dead, and no better chance offered

than to take advantage of the inexorable laws of the Gipsy band, to put him to death for desertion.

Those who saw the brave Kosta go out in the surf-skiff, half naked, suffering from the cruel blows of the cat-whip, without food, and facing that fearful storm, felt that it was but a suicidal act, for they could not believe that he could live a minute, once he had gotten into the channel.

But they obeyed the orders of their king and ran down to the harbor to capture him if within their power.

Outside of the haven all was a scene of wild fury, for the storm was lashing the sea into a caldron of foam; huge waves dashed madly over the reefs, and there seemed no hope that so small a craft could live an instant.

This the brave Gipsy crews saw, and they hesitated when they reached the decks of their vessels.

There were a score of pretty, stanch craft in harbor, and a number of skiffs and sail-boats, and the crews of each had gone down to board them, in obedience to their new king's command; but there they hesitated, and Lindo himself saw the madness of any attempt to follow his desperate brother.

So he sounded the recall, and all eyes watched the surf-skiff, revealed by the vivid flashes of lightning, until they saw it disappear amid the foam and spray of the wild channel seas.

Then they felt that Kosta had gone to his death.

"Art content, now, murderer?" said a voice at the side of Lindo.

He started at the daring words and turned upon the speaker.

"Carriza!"

"Yes, I am Carriza."

"What said you?"

"I asked if thou wert content now, thou Cain-accursed man!"

"Carriza!" and the man started; "dost know to whom you speak?"

"I do—to a false king, with a coward heart and now a murderer!" was the savage response.

The man started toward the maiden, as with impulse to strike her; but checked himself and asked:

"What was my brother to you?"

"The one man of all that I loved!"

"Ha! thy lover?"

"Yes, for I was to be his wife!"

"And yet, thy father pledged you to me."

"No, he pledged my hand, for that he had power to do, but not my heart. I loved Kosta; he had my heart. He was willing to give you your kingship, without a contest, if you would allow him to leave this island with me; but no! Your pride, your vanity, led you to believe you were able to show your prowess, your skill, your strength over all men, and you demanded that the king's commands should be obeyed."

"They were, and you were beaten, humiliated; your pride was crushed; then you sought to destroy the victor."

"You deserted him in the sea, after he had saved your life—you returned to tell that he was dead, and you thus made yourself king!"

"You are a false king, and your first act was to crush your brother, to cruelly punish him, to mar his flesh with scars and drive him out into yonder wild sea to take his own life."

"Such you are, Lindo, a false King of the Sea Gipsies and a coward!" and the maiden looked up defiantly into his face.

He heard her words in stern silence, and, to her surprise he showed no anger, but simply said:

"You are called the Queen of the Sea Gipsies, Carriza."

"Yes, from my beauty and that only; the real queen was your noble mother, but hated she was by our people; in resembling her, Kosta, your twin brother, was for that reason dishonored—robbed of his just inheritance."

"But you bear the name of queen by compliment, and I would make you queen in reality, Carriza," pleaded the king.

"Ah! Lindo, how your true nature comes forth when you can show it without fear, being king! You woo a maid over the open grave of her lover; you talk love while your heart should sicken at its load of crime and bleed with shame over your noble old father lying yonder in his coffin!"

"Out upon such a counterfeit of manhood as you are, King Lindo! I despise you, ay, abhor you, King of the Sea Gipsies!"

"By the sword and anchor, emblems of our people, Carriza, but you shall rue those words!" hissed the man, white with anger and shame.

"Threatening a girl now, Sir Gipsy, our coward king? That is like a king, truly—a king so base as you!"

He half-drew a knife from his belt at her biting words.

"I have wooed you, Carriza, and you shall be mine—or Death's. Remember our laws—that the woman who refuses the love of a Sea Gipsy king is to be shot to death and sunk into the sea in wrapped with iron chains!"

"Pah! What care I for iron chains after death? And death I prefer than to become the wife of such a monster as you!"

"So now, King Lindo, do your worst! Though your slaves may tremble at your voice, I, a true Gipsy girl, neither fear nor respect you; I loathe you from my soul!" and like a queen she turned away, and from the shut teeth of Lindo came the words:

"She shall be my wife or she shall die! She has her choice!"

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE OR DEATH.

IT was the morning following the scenes related in the foregoing chapters.

The storm had died away, and only the roar of the sea upon the island coast told how severe had been the tempest.

The little fleet rode at anchor in the snug little harbor, and the bold Gipsy sailors were on board seeing that all was ship-shape.

A strange calmness rested upon all, and a strange feeling of unrest was in every heart.

All that had occurred would not be obliterated from the memories of the most reckless, and the cruel conduct of the usurper against his twin brother, which sent him forth in that mad tempest, bleeding, heart-broken, desperate, was talked over in low tones by those who remembered the gallant Kosta.

Then the darling of Carriza, the Gipsy beauty, queen she was called, was talked of, and those who knew Lindo best shook their heads sadly as they thought of the manner in which the beautiful girl had defied and scorned him.

It was the day on which the burial of the dead king must take place, and the largest vessel, the old ruler's own craft, the Wind-Chaser, had been draped in black and the coffin placed on board.

The rest of the fleet had also been draped with sable folds, and the flag of the Gipsies of the Sea—a blue field with a gilt anchor on one side, a pair of crossed swords on the other—had been run up to the peak of each vessel.

At last all was in readiness, and the new king, Lindo, left his home, once his father's, and descended to the shore, where a boat met him and carried him on board the funeral-ship.

Other boats were busy carrying the Sea Gipsies out to the various vessels of the little fleet, and then a gun on the king's schooner gave the signal to get under way.

Out of the harbor they sailed, dancing upon the rough waters as they sailed through the channel and then plunging over the heavy waves of the Gulf.

A league out from the island they sailed, and then the fleet hove to in a line, the Wind-Chaser ahead of the others.

Then over the stern of the funeral-craft appeared the casket, the shells sparkling in the sunlight, and amid the chanting of hundreds of voices from the vessels of the fleet, it was dropped into the sea.

A splash and the coffin disappeared from sight forever, and, standing upon the deck, King Lindo threw into the waters after it a gold cross and a jewel-hilted sword, the emblems of the Sea Gipsies' band.

And thus the old king was sent to his last resting-place in the ocean depths, and the new ruler headed his fleet back to his island home.

As he stepped ashore from the boat he saw one person who had not attended the burial of his father.

It was Carriza!

"You did not attend my father's burial?" he said, sternly.

"No, I remained here by the grave in my heart."

"You defy me?"

"I despise you."

"You know I rule here now, and my word is life or death to those who anger me."

"Oh, yes, I know your power, and I full well know your base heart."

"And still defy?"

"I do not defy you; I am indifferent, that is all."

"I have asked you to be my wife."

"And I refuse, absolutely refuse."

"Remember what it is to refuse the love of a Sea Gipsy king!"

"I know what it is; but death I do not fear; as I abhor you, so I do not shudder at death which releases me from you."

"Girl, I love you, and loving I forgive your cruel words. Nay, more, I again ask you to be my wife, and thus become Queen of the Sea Gipsies!"

"In one hour I shall send for you to come to me and I will expect your answer. On that answer hangs your fate; so remember!"

So speaking, he strode rapidly on to the royal lodge, and Carriza walked slowly to her own pretty little house, where she dwelt with her parents and her brother—the latter a handsome youth, and the one who had begged mercy for Kosta at his brother's hands.

"Yampal, I have been insulted by Lindo," she said, addressing her brother, who quickly responded.

"What, sister, a King of the Sea Gipsies insult a maiden of his own people?"

"You know where my heart is—in the sea with brave Kosta, for he cannot have escaped death, fearless and powerful as he is."

"He will not attempt it, I fear, for he was humiliated so by his brother that he can but wish to die, and so he went to his death in the sea, where all our people are buried."

"Yes, I fear so; and yet while I mourned for him, King Lindo asked me to become his wife, and so I say that he insulted me, for he is the murderer of my lover."

"Hush, Carriza! for you must not so speak of Lindo, our king."

"I care not, Yampal, for I have but a short while to live."

"You!" and the young man grasped his sister's arm.

"You, our child, but a short while to live?" and the father arose from his easy-chair and confronted the maiden, while the mother also approached.

"Yes, I told the truth," she said, sadly.

"But why? Has the king condemned you to death?" wailed the mother.

"Not in so many words, mother, and yet he has done so."

"But how and why?"

"My parents and brother, King Lindo has asked me to become his wife."

"You are honored, then, my Carriza, for his father went away from our people for a bride."

"Were poor Kosta king, the honor would indeed be great; but with Lindo king, the murderer of my love, it would be ignominy, and so I shall refuse."

"Refuse!"

"Carriza!"

"My poor lost child!"

Such were the expressions that came from the lips of all three at her stern words.

"I mean it," she said, firmly.

"Do you know the penalty of a Gipsy maid refusing to marry our king?" asked her father.

"Yes; it is death."

"By her own hand, my poor child."

"So be it, father."

"And you prefer death?"

"I do, and such is my desire—such will be my answer to King Lindo," was her response.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOOMED.

A SENSE of horror came over the little household of the young girl.

The father was a bold sailor, who stood high among his people. The old king was wont to ask his advice in many ways, and a wise counselor he was, too.

He was rich in this world's goods, and his son, Yampal, was considered the handsomest young man in the tribe, with the exception of Kosta and Lindo, as his daughter, Carriza, was by far the most beautiful maiden upon the island.

She had loved Kosta from her earliest girlhood, and, as they grew older, they were considered lovers by all, though the maiden was wont often to charge the young prince with having a lady-love elsewhere.

The two were bound by no pledges, for Kosta had made none, yet the chain of love seemed to inwrap them both.

Lindo, in his conversation with Carriza, had professed ignorance of this love affair, though he had long known it full well. He madly loved Carriza himself, and it was jealousy of his brother that had brought forth in his heart envy, hatred and malice for him.

Having usurped the place of king, he had quickly revealed his feelings toward his brother, while he at once felt that he had the power to make the maiden marry him.

She had other suitors by the score among the daring young Sea Gipsies, but she looked upon none as a rival.

So he had given her an hour in which to accept or decline his answer, feeling assured that he would meet with no refusal.

He had, some time before, asked her hand of her father, and the old sailor consented, only requesting that the result would be upon Carriza's acceptance, as he told Lindo that there was a love affair between her and his brother.

So matters stood when Carriza made known her startling determination to her parents and brother to accept death rather than become King Lindo's wife.

In pathetic accents they pleaded with her, begging her to consider that a life of unhappiness might not follow, and that it was better to live than to die.

"I prefer death," was her irrevocable decision.

Soon after the messengers from the king came to the cabin of Duval, the old king's friend.

They brought word that Carriza was to accompany them to the presence of Lindo, and her parents and brother were also to go with her.

Without a word she placed herself between the messengers, while her grieving kindred followed behind, the mother supported by her husband and son.

All who saw them knew well what it meant, and they wondered if Carriza would throw away her life by a refusal of the Gipsy king.

Reaching the royal cottage, they were ushered into the assembly chamber, where the king was

wont to decide important matters regarding the affairs of the islanders.

Lindo was there, seated in the chair which his father had occupied for twenty-five years, and his eyes fell upon Carriza as she entered.

The messengers led her directly in front of Lindo, and then stepped to one side, while her parents and brother took up a position behind her.

"Carriza, I have sent for you, as I said I would, upon a matter of deep importance to me, and I will also say to you."

"Unlike my father, I will not go away from my people to seek a bride, but ask you to become my wife."

"I love you; I respect your parents and forgive your brother Yampal for his bold pleading against my punishment of Kosta, my brother. I ask you therefore, Carriza, to become my bride, within the month, on the day you name, and I await your answer."

"You shall have it; I decline. I will not marry you!"

The words came sharply, and the young Gipsy started, while a groan broke from the lips of the mother and father of the determined girl.

"I believe you are aware of the penalty of a Gipsy maid refusing the offer of a king of her people?"

"Yes, and I prefer the penalty to the infamy of being your wife, Sir King of the Sea Gipsies!" said Carriza, boldly.

A dark scowl swept over the face of Lindo, and he said:

"The penalty is death."

"I will welcome it!"

"Either of three deaths: first, to be loaded with chains and sunk alive into the sea; second, to be shot to death and sunk in chains; or, third, to die by poison, taken by one's own hand."

"I am a Gipsy, and I know our laws," was the response.

"You shall have your choice."

"It matters not to me."

"Then I shall decide for you, and my sentence is that at this hour to-morrow night you shall die by your own hands," and the Sea Gipsies king spoke with fierce decision. "Our doctor," continued Lindo, "shall prepare the poison and it shall be sent to you. With it shall come a pardon, if you change your mind."

"You can go, Carriza."

She smiled defiantly and turned away, going with her grief-stricken parents and brother back to her home.

Without a tear dimming her beautiful eyes, she passed through the mournful hours of probation, deaf to all entreaties and as firm as adamant in her resolve to die.

The day passed away with a gloom resting upon all.

The young men wore gloomy brows—the old people shook their heads sadly and in silence when speaking of their new king—the children were less boisterous at play, seeming to feel a shadow upon their young hearts.

The storm had blown away, and bright sunshine followed, while a balmy breeze only stirred the sea; but the memory of the bold, handsome young Gipsy sailor, who had proven himself the one to wear his father's title of king—who had manfully suffered ignominious punishment, and then gone forth into the wild storm to die, lingered in every heart.

Slowly the day dragged its dreary hours away, and at nightfall, the doctor—a young Gipsy skilled in medicinal herbs and the dressing of wounds—was summoned to the royal cottage.

A fine-looking Gipsy he was, bronzed almost to the hue of an Indian, with a manly, intelligent face, and yet one in which rested a look of intense sadness.

"Zampa, have you prepared the death-drug I ordered for Carriza?" asked Lindo.

"I have, sir."

"It is deadly?"

"It is."

"How taken?"

"In a goblet of wine."

"And the result?"

"The one who drinks it will gradually sink into a deep sleep."

"The sleep of death?"

"Yes, King Lindo."

"You are to wait and see Carriza die, if she so decides, but if she accepts my offer, you are to give her this pardon."

"Yes, King Lindo."

"I have ordered the chains prepared, to inwrap her after death, and two of my schooner's crew will row you out upon the sea, when she is to be buried."

"I understand, King Lindo."

"Now go, and let me know whether she becomes the bride of death or of King Lindo."

Zampa bowed and turned away, walking slowly toward the home of the doomed maiden. She was there, and received him with a sad smile of welcome.

She was dressed in a snowy white costume, and held across her arm her shroud, while she said:

"I am prepared for death, you see, Zampa."

"Yes," was his only response, and his face was white and stern.

Her parents were in deep black, as was also her brother, and other kindred sat around with bowed heads and aching hearts.

All entreaties had failed to move Carriza from her purpose and she was doomed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAIR SUICIDE.

WHITE almost as the robe she wore, Carriza was yet perfectly calm and self-possessed.

The coming of Zampa had caused all to start, for they knew his fateful errand; but she had met him with a smile of welcome.

Never before had she seemed so grandly beautiful to those about her; yet not a hand could be stretched forth to save, for an iron law bound those strange people; from their king's will there was no appeal.

All had been astounded that Carriza had so boldly taken the part of Kosta, flinging the word "coward" in the teeth of her king; but she had done so, and more, she had rejected his offer of marriage, telling him that he was Cain-accursed.

No power could save her, unless the young tyrant relented.

"Carriza, I am come to you with a death-sentence in one hand, a pardon in the other. The one will send you, a beautiful maid, stepping across the threshold of womanhood, with life's fair promises all yet to be fulfilled, to a grave in the depths of the sea, your fair form inwrapped with chains, and to live only in the memory of your kindred and your people."

"Do you mark my words, Carriza?"

"I do," she answered, calmly, as her eyes fearlessly met Zampa's.

Then he continued:

"The pardon will save you from death, will prevent you from being forced to raise this golden goblet to your lips, dying by your own hand, and will open to you a life of honor as the bride of our king."

"Love may be entombed in your own heart, and its grave may be ever before your eyes, but life will remain, and your people will try to make the sunshine in your existence dispel the shadows that may arise."

"Do you mark what life will bring to you, Carriza?"

"I do," came the same unfaltering answer.

"And now, Carriza, in the presence of your sorrow-bowed parents, your kinsmen and kinswomen, whose hearts ache for you, I beg you to decide which shall it be, life or death?" asked Zampa, of the beautiful girl.

It was a moment of appalling silence that followed, and straining, pleading eyes were turned toward the young girl, while a mother's hands were outstretched beseechingly, yet silently, and a mother's deep, holy love shone upon that pathetic, appealing face.

Then came the answer:

"I shall drink the death-potion, dying by my own hand, rather than wed Lindo, the coward King of the Sea Gipsies, and so make known to him, Zampa."

A moan broke from every lip; then came a heavy fall, and the mother of Carriza had fallen to the floor in a swoon.

"Quick, give me the poison that I may die ere my poor mother returns to consciousness. Quick! for I am ready, Zampa."

He took the small golden goblet from the table, put into it a dark powder, and then filled it up to the brim with wine.

"How will I die, Zampa?" and the voice faltered for the first time.

"As though you were falling to sleep."

"There will be no pain?"

"None."

"No horrid nightmares?"

"No, you will, on the contrary, die amid scenes of beauty celestial, which the effects of the drug will have upon your brain," said Zampa.

"I am glad that it is so. Give me the goblet!"

He handed it to her, and her kinspeople were about to press forward to say farewell when Zampa checked them.

"Nay, nay! Would you unnerve her?—for remember, she stands over her own grave, and you must not break her iron nerve," said the Gipsy Sea King's messenger.

"Thank you, Zampa," she said with a sweet smile, and she held out her hand and grasped his, while she said:

"Let me hold your hand, for you will know when death comes."

"Yes," and Zampa's voice was hoarse with emotion.

"Father, mother, brother, kinsfolk, farewell—a last, a long good-by!"

As Carriza spoke she seemed to look into the very souls of each one present; then fearlessly the Gipsy Queen carried the fatal cup to her lips and in another moment had swallowed the deadly draught.

A moan arose from every breast, and heads were bowed in grief; but Zampa led her to a sofa and seated her upon it.

A glance around upon those present, and then her head sunk gently back upon a pillow, her

eyes closed and a smile came upon her now angelically beautiful face.

A moment more and Zampa said:

"All is over!"

"And is this death?"

The question came from Yampal, the brother, as he bent over his sister, upon whose face the smile still lingered.

"Yes," was Zampa's low answer.

"Then how beautiful is death!" and Yampal leaned over and kissed the fair lips.

"Now bid her farewell, for I must enshroud her," ordered Zampa.

A few moments more and the farewells were said, the fair form was enshrouded carefully in the winding-sheet, and the two oarsmen of the boat that was to bear her out upon the waters, to a midnight burial, came in with a litter, and Carriza was borne out into the darkness, Zampa following close behind.

But no one else followed, and not a light shone in any Sea Gipsy's cabin; the body was borne to the shore of the harbor—the homes were as gloomy as the hearts of the people who had known Carriza and loved her so well.

A delay of a few moments at the shore, while Zampa went to his cabin, and all was ready.

Into the boat the litter holding the body of Carriza was placed; the two men grasped their oars, Zampa held the tiller, and out upon the starlit waters of the Gulf the burial barge held its way.

CHAPTER X.

ZAMPA'S STRANGE DEEDS.

"Is this far enough out, Zampa?"

The question came from one of the oarsmen of the barge, who saw that they had rowed a league from the Gipsies' Isle.

"No, we must go two leagues out," was Zampa's answer.

"So far?" asked the Gipsy, in surprise.

"Perhaps I can lighten the way, and the weary work at the oars, for I have a flask here with me," was Zampa's response, and he took from his pocket a small bottle of liquor.

This he handed to the oarsmen, who both drank with a relish; then he placed the flask to his own lips and seemingly drained it.

The oarsmen pulled on with a will, and the burial barge moved rapidly over the waters—but only for a short while, for one of the men dropped his hold upon the oar, while he said in a strange way:

"What ails me, Zampa?"

Zampa made no reply, for he was rubbing his face with his hands, and just then the other oarsman let go the oar and attempted to stand up.

"My God! Am I dying, Zampa? Quick! save me, for I am blind! I cannot—Oh! what ails me?"

"Comrades," said Zampa, in a low voice, and with seeming effort: "I fear we drank of the wrong flask. I had one of a decoction for poor old Rinvert, to ease his pain, so that he could sleep—the other was brandy. We all must have drunk of the wrong flask."

"Then we will die!" cried one of the men in a tone of horror.

"No, but we will go into a deep sleep and—"

He said no more, for his head sunk upon his breast and he fell back in the boat, either dead or in a stupor.

The two oarsmen sat in an attitude of despair, appearing to be unable to move.

They stretched forth their hands in an aimless kind of way, but soon dropped from their seats into the bottom of the barge.

A moment the three remained so, as silent, as motionless as the form of poor Carriza.

Then one head was raised and glared around upon the others.

It was Zampa!

Slowly he arose and moved toward the two oarsmen.

A hand was laid upon each pulse, one after the other; then out from beneath the seats a small mast was drawn. On it was a leg-of-mutton sail.

This mast the Gipsy doctor stepped, then went back to the tiller; the little sail caught the light breeze and the boat glided over the sea at the rate of a league to the hour.

Straight toward a dark spot upon the waters it held its way, and soon there loomed up ahead an island.

It was what the Sea Gipsies called the "Grave Reef," or Isle, for there was buried the bride of the old king, the mother of Lindo and Kosta.

Straight to the lee of the island sailed the burial barge, and with such impetus that it ran out upon the sands one fourth its length.

The man at the tiller then arose, and lifting the girl's body from the litter bore it ashore.

He walked over the low sandy beach, passed on through the pines and reached the sheltered spot where was the grave of the wife of the old sea king.

Upon a bed of pine-spines the form of Carriza was gently placed, and for some moments Zampa stood gazing down upon her in silent grief, apparently.

Then he turned away, taking from beneath his cloak a white cloth and sat down upon the sand.

The cloth proved to be a bag, and with quick hands he filled it with sand until it assumed almost the form of a human being.

Going to the boat he took from a bundle which he had brought wrapped in his cloak a white, shroud-like cloth, and this he wrapped around the bag filled with the sand, enveloping it completely.

Raising the dummy in his strong arms he carried it to the boat and placed it upon the litter, where had rested the form of Carriza.

Then he went ashore once more, a bundle in his arms, and disappeared among the pines.

For some minutes he was gone, and returning, shoved off the boat, took the tiller once more and headed toward the Gipsies' Island.

A sail of a league, and he lay-to; the mast was replaced with its sail beneath the seats, and going to first one and then the other of the two oarsmen he placed something upon their lips.

Quickly then he resumed his place in the stern, lying in the position in which he had fallen back, apparently under the influence of the decoction of which all had partaken.

"It is more than three hours since they drank the drugged wine, and that extract I placed upon their lips will revive them."

"Ha! one already moves, and we shall see; but both of them must see the beautiful form of Carriza before it is sunk to the depths of the sea."

Zampa dropped back in the stern-sheets, and a moment after, one of the oarsmen arose from his recumbent position and gazed in a wondering way about him.

Then his comrade moving caught his eye, and he bent over and touched him.

"Lunak, we are not dead," he cried out in a bewildered sort of way.

Lunak arose, gazed upon his mate and said:

"It was the drink that did it. But Zampa still sleeps or—is he dead?"

"No, not dead, for he is young, and his head is not as strong as ours."

"We will try and arouse him, and then we must bury Carriza and hasten back, for the stars show that it is past midnight," and the man moved to the side of Zampa and gave him a vigorous shake, while he cried:

"Come, Zampa! Do not die by your own poison! Awake, man! Awake!" and he shook him again.

CHAPTER XI.

INTO THE OCEAN DEPTHS.

"COME, Zampa! Are you dead?"

The speaker was Lunak, one of the two oarsmen of the burial barge.

His companion seemed still to feel the influence of the drug, but was recovering rapidly.

Zampa moved uneasily, and feigning well returning consciousness, soon sat up and looked about him.

His eyes fell first upon his comrades, then upon the shrouded dummy on the litter, and next, out upon the sea.

Then he bent over and bathed his face with sea-water and after a moment said:

"We did not die, as you feared, comrades, for I remember now we drank of the medicated wine, instead of from my brandy-flask."

"A few teaspoonfuls would relieve pain, but we took enough to put us in a deep sleep."

"We must hasten, for hours have passed."

"Yes, though no one will take account of our stay, so that we return before dawn, and I think our having taken the drugged wine had best remain a secret between us," said Nunez.

"So say I," Lunak remarked.

"I deem it best, also, mates; but here—there is no drug in this bottle, and we need something to build us up."

"Come, Lunak and Nunez, quaff a good drink."

The men seemed a little doubtful, after their experience, and one asked:

"Art sure, Zampa, that you are right this time?"

"Oh, yes, for here is the drugged flask, which I had forgotten to deliver and brought with me. I will lead off."

He drank several swallows from the flask and the others did likewise, smacking their lips with evident relish.

"Now give me the chains, comrades, and I will wrap poor Carriza in them," ordered Zampa.

They drew them out from the bottom of the boat, and refusing aid, for reasons the reader can understand, Zampa wrapped the supposed dead form in them.

He did it carefully, and then said:

"Now, raise your end of the litter and we will let the body slip off into the sea."

The oarsmen obeyed, and, with a rattling of chains the white object slipped off and plunged into the waters.

A flashing of the white shroud, as it went rapidly downward, caught the eyes of the three men, and from the lips of Zampa came the words:

"Poor Carriza!"

"Ay, ay—poor girl!"

"Rest her soul."

Such were the words spoken over the supposed body of the girl who had refused the love

of the Sea Gipsies' king, and yet no word against the cruel man who had condemned her to death.

The Sea Gipsies were true to their religion, which was that he whom they called king could do no wrong.

"There is no reason now, comrades, why we should not hoist sail and run back," said Zampa, for the men had not gone out under sail, fearing to throw the body off of the litter should the barge career far over.

The mast was taken out from under the seats and stepped, the sail set, and the barge was headed for the island, a fair wind favoring them.

It was not yet dawn when the little boat ran into the harbor and the three separated to go to their homes.

"Mind, comrades, no word about our having taken drugged wine," said Nunez.

"No, not a word," was the answer from Zampa and Lunak, and the three parted.

Going to his cabin, late as it was, and fatigued by all that he had passed through, Zampa did not retire.

He dwelt alone in his cabin, which had four rooms, divided into bedroom, sitting-room, kitchen and laboratory.

The young medicine-man of the Island Gipsies held much influence among his people, and he was greatly respected by all, though many wondered why his life the past year had seemed to be one of sadness.

Some thought that he loved Carriza and knew that his love was hopeless, yet few there were who could say that he had been very devoted in his attentions to her.

His best friend had been Kosta, and he had seemed to feel deeply the ignominy placed upon him by King Lindo, but had said:

"It is best that he should go forth to die in the sea rather than live under the shame put upon him by being lashed with the cat-whip."

Now, as he paced to and fro in his little sitting-room, a strange expression rested upon Zampa's face.

It was one of grief, but, seemingly, of triumph, too, both strangely commingling.

At times his face would flush and then grow pale, and his eyes flashed with a savage luster now and then.

Suddenly stopping in his walk, he fairly hissed:

"Well, Kosta is at the bottom of the sea, Carriza is supposed to be in the ocean depths, and King Lindo rules the Sea Gipsies."

"But the end is not yet—not yet!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEA GIPSY'S DESTINY.

WHEN Kosta, the rightful king, according to the commands of his dead father, walked away from the scene where he had met his cruel punishment, it was with an almost breaking heart and a pride that was lowered to the dust with shame.

With back bared to the waist, and gashes in the flesh from which the red blood trickled, he walked toward the harbor shore.

But the pain dealt to the flesh he did not feel; it was the agony to his proud spirit that tortured him.

Dare he live among his people under such humiliation?

"No! I must die!"

So he said, and springing into a boat, with sudden impulse, he seized the oars and sent it flying across the waters of the little harbor.

He heard the wild roar of the sea in its fury outside, and saw by the wild glare of the lightning that he was being pursued; but he knew well that none would dare venture from the harbor in that fierce storm.

"I dare it, and thus prove, by facing the last test, my right to be King of the Sea Gipsies," he said, grimly, as he sent his light boat flying into the danger ahead.

It was an accident that he had taken a surf-skiff, a life-boat, that would live in wild waters; but he had not noted this until he felt the little craft bounding over the waves like a cork.

As the fugitive Sea Gipsy passed out of the harbor the salt spray dashed upon his lacerated back, bleeding from the cruel blows of the whip, and the wounds smarted with agony intense.

But he still held on his way, his face stern, his teeth set, and a determination to go into the mad waters and find there his grave.

But the surf-skiff did not swamp in the wild seas, and, though not watching his course through the dangerous channel, he yet steered clear of every rock and ragged reef.

Was it Fate that guided the daring Sea Gipsy through the perils of that fearful night, reserving him for a different destiny than death in the ocean depths?

So it seemed, for his surf-skiff leaped over the breakers, passed through the caldron of waters, and was soon riding the long rolling waves of the sea, having passed unscathed through the mad channel where Kosta the Sea Gipsy had gone to seek his death.

In an amazement that was almost dismay, he dropped his oars and looked about him.

The storm-clouds seemed fairly to trail upon

the seas, and the spray dashed high in air. His little skiff was swept along over the black waters, and when a vivid flash of lightning would pierce the gloom, he beheld the Gipsies' Island over half a league away.

Again came a flash, and his eyes were now strained in another direction.

It was toward the little pine-covered island where was the grave of his mother.

It seemed to beckon him on with hope, and the Sea Gipsy almost shouted the words:

"No! no! no! I will not die, but live! I defy death, even here in its very face, and I will live! yes, live for revenge!"

As if in utter defiance of death, he shook his clinched fist at the inky storm-clouds and the playing tongues of lightning.

He had passed through the channel by blind chance, and out of that caldron, surrounded by reefs and in waters that fairly leaped up to the low flying clouds, he did not fear the mighty waves of the sea.

So toward the Grave Isle he headed his skiff, and his strong arms began to battle with the waves to reach the destination he now sought.

He remembered that his mother had been a stranger among the Gipsies, and that his father had brought her to the island after one of his voyages.

He did not remember her, but he was told that she was "fair as a lily, and beautiful as a rose."

Whether she was a captive of his father, or a willing bride, he knew not. Certain it was that the old king had not buried her in the sea, where all Gipsies were buried to keep their souls from wandering aimlessly after death, but he had made her grave upon that lonely isle, leagues away from the island where his people dwelt, and from the mainland also as far.

The striking against his broad breast, of the packet he had taken from his mother's grave, that afternoon, reminded him of its existence.

Then he remembered that Carriza had thrown the silken cord, to which it was attached, over his head, and he smiled, as he muttered:

"A good omen that I have this with me."

It was of leather, hardly larger than a pocket-book, and tightly sealed.

What it contained Kosta could not guess. He only knew that his father had said the one who became king in his stead, be it his brother or himself, would learn a secret regarding his mother.

That secret would be found in a leather package, hidden away in a shell upon his mother's grave, but until his, the old king's, death, it was not to be disturbed; then the one swimming to the island would win the right to have the package.

"Lindo usurped the place he holds, but I have won the honors and I hold now this sacred souvenir from my mother's grave."

"How strange that I, so strangely like her all the old Gipsies say, should be now an out-cast, seeking a resting-place upon the island whereon is the grave of my poor mother."

"There is a weird fate in all this, and I shall follow my destiny, lead where it may."

So said the daring young Sea Gipsy as he rowed on his way, slowly but surely making headway toward the Grave Island.

But the storm still raged with relentless fury, and the surf-skiff seemed often about to go down underneath the waters.

But each time it rose again, and the bold, powerful oarsman struggled on.

It was a desperate fight for life, but at last the island was reached, and the man staggered out of the skiff and fell beyond the reach of the surf, utterly exhausted.

For a long while he lay there, hardly able to move, and his eyes turned upon the tempest-lashed waters.

Suddenly he started, as a blinding glare of lightning came, seeming to set the sea on fire.

But it was not the lightning that caused the Sea Gipsy to start and struggle to his feet, but an object out upon the waters upon which his eyes had fallen in that momentary blaze of light.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

WHETHER by design, or not, the Sea Gipsies had selected an island for their dwelling-place which was certainly not readily approached by sailing-vessels.

In good weather, and with a light breeze, vessels would sometimes pass through the channels, among the islands, reefs and keys that dotted the waters, but they were wont to avoid the dangerous locality when there was a prospect of a blow.

For this reason the Gipsies' Island, and those in its vicinity were seldom seen by the crews of strange vessels.

And also, these waters had the name of being infested with island buccaners, which fact would naturally keep afar off all merchant craft at least.

When therefore Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, as he lay upon the shore of the isle, that held the grave of his mother, beheld a vessel out upon the sea, he was startled.

Had it been one of the Sea Gipsies' vessels, in that wild blow, it would have startled him, and he would have supposed at once that it had come in chase of him, feeling assured that he would seek the Grave Isle for safety.

But the lightning's flash had revealed the fact that it was not one of the island fleet, but a large brig.

Kosta also discovered that the vessel was armed, was stripped of all canvas and had her anchors down.

Yet the fact that she was anchored was no sign of her safety, for he could see that she was dragging them rapidly.

The bottom he well knew was of hard sand, and the huge iron flukes could get no hold there against such a fearful tornado as was raising such seas and surges.

"She is driving stern-foremost upon the Devil's-back Reefs, and will be dashed to pieces. I must, I will save her!"

So he said, as he arose to his feet and peered out over the waters.

The vessel was not a quarter of a mile off the island, and slowly, yet alas! rapidly, too, was drifting to destruction upon a sunken reef, half a league away.

Going to the shore Kosta gave a cry of alarm.

And, no wonder, for his own boat was gone! In his desperate fatigue he had not thrown the light anchor out on the beach, so the skiff had been carried off by the waves.

He well knew that, to remain on that Grave Isle was death to him, for he had no food.

Unless some of the people from the island came there to search for him he would soon die of starvation.

He now was a desperate man, a fugitive, one who had sought death and yet had been spared, and at the very moment of safety he seemed to be deserted by fate and left to die.

"No; despite this raging sea I will try and reach yonder craft. It is death here; it is death out in the mad sea; but, what care I? As fate has befriended me once, perhaps it will do so again!"

So saying, he went to a point of the island that gave him the best chance of reaching the brig and boldly plunged into the wild waters.

So manfully did he battle with the waves that it seemed almost as if they were his natural element.

He held his way over to the southward to get on a line with the brig, and by a desperate struggle reached a point dead ahead of the vessel, which was still dragging her two anchors at an alarming rate.

The huge billows fairly hurled him upon his way, going as he was with the wind, and when upon the top of a mighty crest he would be seized in the grip of the fierce tempest and dragged almost out of the water.

It was literally a life and death struggle for the brave man there in that tempest-tossed ocean, and a struggle for the lives of others even more than for his own.

But he had a will equal to his daring, and a strength equaling his endurance, and so he would not yield to despair.

Soon the brig was near; he could see that she was plunging fearfully and that huge waves swept her decks fore and aft.

Then came the thought of how he was to board her. He must be careful or he would be dashed to death against her bows, and if not that, did he miss grasping a rope he would be swept by to certain doom.

Suddenly, as he rose on the top of a mighty wave, the Sea Gipsy hailed in a voice that reached the ears of those on the brig:

"Brig, ahoy! ahoy, the brig!"

Had a cry from Heaven fallen upon their ears those upon the vessel-of-war could not have been more startled.

Instantly a warning command rung out from the commander's lips, for where else could that hail have come except from on board a vessel?

Then all eyes were strained over the sea to catch sight of the vessel which they believed driving upon them.

Each man was clinging for his life, many of them lashed to the bulwarks, masts, guns or rigging to avoid being swept off by the boarding seas.

But the straining eyes peering through the darkness saw no sail, no vessel driving along under bare poles.

Then again came the startling hail:

"Brig ahoy! ahoy!"

The superstitious seamen looked no longer out upon the tempest-tossed sea, but at each other.

"That hail comes not from live man's lips," was the thought in almost every brain.

It was often reported along that coast that those waters were haunted by ghostly craft, with spirit crews, and certainly, with no vessel visible, and such a stentorian hail, there was but one thought—that a spirit sailor hailed the brig.

Again there came the cry, nearer than before and dead ahead.

"Ahoy the brig! Stand by to throw me ropes on either side!"

Not a man moved, though the words reached every ear distinctly.

Then once more was heard the trumpet-like voice:

"Brig ahoy! If you do not save me I will drive by and be lost!"

"Throw ropes over to starboard and port!" This command seemed to awaken the commander of the brig to action, and he shouted back:

"Ahoy! Who hails and where?"

But the words were blown back in his teeth and no answer was returned.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERIOUS SAILOR.

REALIZING that he could get no aid from those on the brig, who he now judged had not heard his hail, the Sea Gipsy looked about to depend wholly upon himself.

He was now close upon the brig, and the almost continuous lightning revealed the fact that the gallant craft was riding the rough waters well, though she plunged her bows deep beneath the gigantic swells.

This he determined to take advantage of, and watching his chance, he went on the crest of a high-lifting wave over the sharp point of the bowsprit! and as he shot in grasped the stay, and though it blistered his hands to hold on, he did so. When the submerged bows rose out of the sea he quickly found a footing on the spar and made his way with marvelous dexterity to the bows of the brig, springing upon deck and running aft, to the utter amazement of the frightened crew, who certainly regarded him as a veritable sea spook.

A cry of alarm, not unlike horror, arose on all sides, as the lightning revealed to the superstitious crew the Sea Gipsy who had so strangely boarded them in the storm.

As though knowing just what to do, Kosta immediately sought the commander of the brig.

He saluted politely, as he confronted that amazed officer, and said, without waiting for questioning:

"I saw that your brig was in danger, sir, for she is dragging her anchors rapidly and going stern-foremost upon the Devil's-back Reef, not over half a mile away, so I am here to act as pilot."

"Who are you?" almost gasped the officer, as he gazed upon the man before him, with his body bared to the waist, hatless, shoeless and bleeding.

"It matters not, sir, who or what I am, as you are now in desperate danger and I can save you."

"But I am no sea spirit or wraith as your officers and crew seem to believe," said the daring Ocean Gipsy, proudly.

"Did you hail the brig?"

"Often, sir, but got no response."

"How did you board?"

"Over the bows, on a mighty wave."

"And your boat?"

"I had no boat, sir."

"From whence do you come?"

"That matters not, sir; I came to save your vessel, I again tell you."

"We were driven in here among the islands, so dropped our anchors, which do drag as you say."

"But, are these not what seamen speak of as the Freebooter Isles, and Haunted Islands?"

"Yes, sir, and you are in danger of dashing on the reefs with which these waters are filled."

"Can you pilot us out?"

"That is for what I came aboard, sir!"

"In this tempest, which is the worst I ever saw?"

"I can run the brig to a place of safety, sir."

"Then do so, for God's sake, for I confess I am powerless to do aught to save the vessel," was the earnest response.

"Put the brig under stormsails, sir, and get up the anchors," ordered the Sea Gipsy in a voice indicating that he was used to command.

"You will need help at the wheel?" asked the commander.

"No, I can manage it best alone."

"And lookouts forward?"

"No, for this lightning reveals to me just where I am."

"There, sir, when the next glare comes, glance astern and see upon what you were driving."

"My God!"

The words broke from more lips than one, as the eyes of the commander, his officers and many of the crew obeyed the Sea Gipsy and glanced astern.

There, revealed by the vivid glare of the lightning, they saw one long line of white, like a hill of snow.

They knew that it was the sea lashed into foam, as it rebounded from the reef in its way.

It was enough to appal the stoutest heart, and all eyes were turned now upon the mysterious man who stood at the wheel.

They realized that the brig had dragged her anchors and driven in among the islands, where reefs, isles, sandbanks and shoals were upon all sides.

Could that man, who had come—from whence no one knew—on board like a creature of the deep, save them from wreck and death?

They asked each other the question with bated breath.

That no one else could do so all well knew.

So they stood at their posts, officers and men alike, ready and anxious to obey the slightest order from the mysterious pilot.

He kept a firm hold upon the wheel, showing wonderful strength, in that he managed it alone, and his eyes swept the sea, first upon one side, then on the other, then ahead and astern, with each recurring flash of lightning.

A stanch craft, under her stormsails the brig drove on, eating her way into the very teeth of the tempest and behaving splendidly.

Few were the orders the mysterious helmsman gave, but they were heard throughout the vessel and were obeyed with an alacrity born of their appalling danger.

"What island is that, pilot?" demanded the captain of the brig.

But the question brought no reply. The Sea Gipsy seemed not to hear.

Again it was repeated.

Still no reply, though the helmsman certainly heard the question, and as certainly knew, for it was the Gipsies' Island.

With an impatient utterance the brig's captain turned away, wondering still more at the mysterious man who held the destinies of himself and crew in his hands.

But he saw that his pilot knew well just what to do, and was extricating the brig from her danger, so he said nothing more, but stood by, silently watching him.

On the brig went, winding through the island channels, until at last open water was gained and she had only the dangers of the storm to face.

The storm now had spent its force, and like all tropic gales suddenly died away as dawn approached, and when at last the sun arose, a light breeze only ran over the waters; the great waves were running down and the brig was out of all peril.

Still at the helm stood the mysterious sailor, his eyes resting upon the vessel, and seeming unconscious of the fact that every eye was upon him.

He had declined to be relieved from duty at the wheel, saying simply:

"I will keep my post yet a while."

When at last the sun arose and shone full upon that handsome, stern face and tall, superb form, with the back gashed from the cruel blows of the cat-whip, officers and men gazed upon the Sea Gipsy, as he stood at the wheel, with absolute awe, and that he was not of another world even the broad daylight could hardly convince them.

CHAPTER XV.

A BITTER RETURN.

"I WOULD like to be relieved now, sir, and have some dry clothing and some food."

The request came from the pilot as the sun arose and showed that the brig was out of sight of land, and the peril of the past night was over, the vessel saved, the crew from death by the mysterious sea guide who had boarded her in the midst of the storm.

All eyes were turned upon his fearfully-scarred back, which here and there still bled slowly.

They saw no ordinary man. They beheld his commanding air, flashing eyes and stern face, in spite of those gashes on his back that told of ignominious punishment.

He had addressed his words to the brig's commander.

The brig was a stanch, trim-built vessel of three hundred tons, with an appearance of speed, a fine battery, and a hundred men in crew.

Her commander, Leo Danforth, was a young man of thirty, with a daring face, handsome withal, and yet one that had a sinister expression upon it.

His form was elegant, his manners courtly to his officers and men, but there seemed to be beneath the velvety exterior a sharp claw always ready to wound.

That his officers and men feared him was evident from the manner in which they watched for his every word or gesture, and yet they were proud of him, for he had won a name for his vessel by his daring and skill.

In response to the pilot's request Captain Danforth called to two men to take the wheel, while he said:

"You should have relinquished the wheel long ago, my man, but, as you seemed stubborn I let you have your way."

"I kept my post, sir, to drive thought away by duty. I am ready now to seek food and rest," was the calm reply.

"You shall have all you wish, my man. But, I deem it but right that I should know you better, so I again ask who you are?"

"It matters not, sir, who I am. Your vessel was in danger, and I saved her, so now I ask only rest and food until you reach some port where I can relieve you of my presence."

Captain Danforth again uttered an impatient

exclamation, and as he turned away called out to a midshipman:

"Mr. Lucas, see that this man has dry clothing, a bunk in the steerage, and food."

The middy saluted and bade the Sea Gipsy follow him.

Kosta also saluted the captain and obeyed the summons of the little middy, Ferd Lucas, and was soon furnished with a dry suit of sailor clothing and had a most substantial breakfast set before him by the steward, for all seemed anxious to do all in their power for the unknown pilot.

Ferd Lucas was, like all boys, inquisitive, and he hoped to discover what the captain had failed to do; but he saw that the Sea Gipsy was not one to idly question, so he did all in his power to make him comfortable, hoping to warm him into a communicative mood.

Ferd's first act was to call the brig's surgeon and have the wounds on his back dressed.

"These gashes were made with a whip, sir?" suggested the surgeon.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"And they were dealt with a heavy hand."

The Sea Gipsy made no reply.

"I am surprised that you were able to stand what you have, after such a severe punishment, and keep at the wheel half the night besides."

"A man can stand a great deal if he is forced to it, sir," was the reply.

"But, how in Heaven's name did you get on board the brig?"

"I swam to her, sir."

"But from where?" persisted the surgeon, as he finished dressing the lacerated back.

There was no reply, and Ferd Lucas was bitterly disappointed.

While being dressed the middy noticed the leather case hung by a silken cord about the neck of the Sea Gipsy.

After breakfast Kosta sought his bunk and threw himself down to rest. He was, of course, almost prostrated with fatigue, and deep slumber came to him at once.

He had requested not to be called, and when at last he awoke he found Midshipman Ferdinand Lucas standing by his side, and a lamp in the steerage was lighted.

"I called you, sir, at the captain's orders, for you have been asleep just twelve hours."

"Ah, yes; I was worn out, but I feel restored now, though very stiff all over."

"I thank you, young sir, for your kindness."

"I've done nothing, sir, and it is for me and all others on this vessel to thank you for our lives."

"The steward will give you your supper, sir, and the surgeon is ready to dress your poor chopped-up back again, after which the captain wishes to see you in the cabin."

"Thank you," was the reply.

And in silence the Sea Gipsy again submitted to the surgeon's care of his wounded back, after which he ate a light supper and was conducted by the middy to the cabin of Captain Danforth.

The young commander of the American brig-of-war, Sentinel, was seated in his large cabin, which was furnished with a degree of elegance and luxury fit for a king's yacht.

In turban smoking-cap, of embroidered silk, velvet dressing-gown, richly needle-worked, and slippers, all the gift of some fair maid, he looked very handsome and comfortable as the Gipsy pilot entered.

A decanter was on a table at his right, and he held in his hand a Turkish pipe, which he had been enjoying; but upon his face was that cynical look which the Sea Gipsy had before noticed.

"Ah, pilot, I am glad to see you, and you are looking better."

"Be seated, and let me not only thank you, but reward you as your services deserve, for we owe our lives and the vessel's safety to you, I am most willing to confess."

The Sea Gipsy did not sit down. Somehow he did not like the man in whose presence he stood, though exactly why he could not tell.

He remained standing while he replied:

"Captain Danforth, you need not thank me, nor would I accept any reward at your hands, for I am not one to take gold for saving human life."

"I certainly shall not place myself under obligations to you, sir, and not be permitted to liquidate the debt," somewhat hotly returned the captain.

"I do not well see, sir, how you can do otherwise, if I decline your thanks and spurn your gold," was the haughty response.

"By Heaven! Sir Pilot, but one would think you were born a gentleman to use words as you do, whereas I take it, you are but some poor fisherman, or dweller upon the islands near where you boarded us. Which is it?"

"What I am, Captain Danforth, holds no interest for you. I boarded your vessel as I saw her danger, and I saved her from destruction."

In return I ask only to be put ashore in Mobile, where Midshipman Lucas tells me your vessel is now bound."

"But I decline to put you ashore until I know more of you, at least."

"You certainly will not hold me as a prison-

er upon your vessel, sir?" demanded the Sea Gipsy, with haughty surprise in look and tone.

"I will do as I deem best, Sir Pilot, though I certainly do not wish to seem harsh with one to whom I owe my life, the lives of my crew and the safety of my vessel."

"In return I offer to liberally reward you, but, as you refuse, I certainly have a right to know who and what you are."

"And I deny the right, sir."

"You refuse to tell me?"

"I do, most assuredly."

"Beware, for I have the power to force you to obey."

A bitter, mocking laugh broke from the lips of the Sea Gipsy at these words, and he returned in a voice that impressed the young captain of the brig:

"My life you can take, sir, as readily as I saved yours, but you have no power to make me speak against my will."

"You came aboard this vessel in a most mysterious way, and—"

"I came aboard at the risk of my own life, as you know, by swimming out to her in a tempest-swept sea."

"Granted; but you came half-naked, and with your back scarred by fresh cuts from a cat-o'-nine-tails. Will you not account for this, sir?"

"I will not."

"Are you a deserter from an American man-of-war, for if so your act to-night will gain your pardon?"

The Sea Gipsy remained silent.

"Hail you are, then, a deserter from an American vessel and fear to speak out?"

"I fear no man, Captain Danforth, nor do I fear to speak. I simply will not say one word when I have made up my mind not to do so," replied the Sea Gipsy, sternly.

"My man, you are a deserter, I am convinced, and if you confess who and what you are, I will pardon you, and more—give you a berth on my brig as an under officer, for the service you have rendered."

"And if I refuse to speak, sir?" calmly asked the Sea Gipsy.

"Then I shall hold you as a deserter, put you in irons, and surrender you as such upon arriving in port."

"I saved your life, sir, your vessel and her crew, and because I will not tell you who I am, you say you will put me in irons! Do your worst Captain Danforth, for I refuse," boldly said the Sea Gipsy, and he folded his arms upon his broad breast, while the brig's commander, angry at being thus defied, shouted out:

"Ho, on deck there!"

"Send a guard here and put this man in irons!"

CHAPTER XVI.

ZAMPA'S DEFIANCE.

WHEN morning dawned upon the Gipsies' Island, a feeling of gloom rested upon all, for the changes that had come could not but impress even those reckless-lived strange people.

Into his grave in the sea the body of the old king was sunk, and Lindo, the usurper, assumed his place, triumphant in having gained a victory that made him the ruler of his people.

The body of the fair Carriza was supposed to be also at the bottom of the deep, a victim of her refusal of King Lindo's love, and Kosta was also thought by all to have gone purposely to his own death, for not one was there in the Gipsy tribe who believed that, brave, strong and skillful as he was known to be, the young Ocean Gipsy prince could survive a struggle in the tempest that swept over the waters when he had dared them in his little skiff.

So it was that the sun rose on the island the day following the scenes of the old king's death, Kosta's supposed suicide, and the burying of Carriza, and its rays dispelled not the gloom in the hearts of the Sea Gipsies.

Perhaps Lindo, in his guilty conscience, guilty of wrong to his noble brother, to whom he owed so much, felt this, and was anxious to turn bitter thoughts in another direction, for he called together the "Council of Twelve," as those were named who were the aides of the king.

They were men appointed by the Sea Gipsy king, and so were swayed wholly by his views and will.

The old king had appointed his Council of Twelve long years before, and only death had removed any of them, and their places were then filled by others, representing the best men of the band.

Would King Lindo retain "The Twelve," those who had been his father's advisers, as worthy of advising him?

This question many asked, and no one seemed to be able to answer it.

Then came reply in the call for The Twelve to assemble.

They did so, a gray-haired, intelligent-faced lot of men, with the dignity of years upon them.

The young king looked them over and at once said:

"My friends, with the going out of my fa-

ther's life, your duty ends, as his councilors, for, though I respect, revere, and love, you as the new ruler of the Sea Gipsies, I am determined to have some changes occur in our laws, and the career of our people.

"I therefore thank you for your services rendered my noble father, and hand you this list of names, those who are now to be my Council of Twelve.

"I beg you to visit each one here named and send them to my presence, after you have looked over those herein named, and see that there is none unworthy the honor I bestow on him."

A look passed between the twelve good men and true, and the elder of the councilors arose and said:

"We accept the dismissal of our king, and, in receiving the names of our successors, can only say that all must be worthy, as no Sea Gipsy can be unworthy according to our laws.

"We will seek out those of our tribe whom you have named and send them to your presence."

"Then there is no objection to any one on the list?" asked King Lindo.

"No objection to any one, King Lindo, though one serious drawback to all."

"Ha! what mean you, Dartfel?" quickly asked Lindo.

"Their youth."

"Ah! you consider youth, then, an objection?" and Lindo spoke with an undisguised sneer.

"Youth is hot-headed, King Lindo, and these are troublous times.

"We are a strange people, a race of ocean wanderers and live to ourselves.

"This island we have found a dearer spot to us than all our other dwelling-places, and here we would wish to remain.

"There are markets near, and though suspicion has fallen upon us, we are yet not branded by any as freebooters, simply as Sea Gipsies.

"Then, in our tribe, rumors have gone around that we could enrich ourselves in other ways than as we do.

"It has been said with our fleet vessels, our daring seamen and our stronghold, we could become Gipsy corsairs that would defy any foes sent against us.

"In speaking of the youth of your Council of Twelve, I only feared that the recklessness of younger years might bring upon us turmoil, sorrow, and perhaps total destruction and death.

"More I need not say, King Lindo, for no longer are we the Council of Twelve."

The old man, Dartfel, a patriarch of the tribe, turned to his comrades as he ceased speaking, and with the list of their successors in his hand, bowed low and left the presence of the young chief.

The first name on the list of the new Twelve was that of Zampa, the "Doctor."

To him then the twelve men went.

They found him in his laboratory, concocting medicines, such as the Gipsies used, and the old man, Dartfel, told him of their mission, at the same time adding:

"We are glad to see that your name is on the list, Zampa, for your father was one of our Twelve, and a wise man, and you have been a worthy follower in his career since his death."

"I thank you, seniors, but I must decline," said Zampa, firmly.

"The king's honor shown you is as a command to obey," said Dartfel, and all were surprised that the young chemist would refuse.

"I care not for the honor, and as to the king's command, my duty as chemist to the tribe must release me.

"Shall I go in person and decline, or will you bear my message to the king?"

"Go in person, while we seek the other young men thus honored, and I grant you none of the others will refuse."

And so the twelve men passed on while Zampa went to the royal cottage.

He greeted Lindo with his usual politeness, and said at once:

"King Lindo, I have come to thank you for the honor offered me, as one of your Council of Twelve, and to decline it."

"Do you mean that you decline?" sternly asked Lindo.

"I do, King Lindo."

"Your reasons?"

"I am chemist of the tribe, and my duties are such as to give me little time for aught else.

"I desire to cruise among the various islands, in search of new herbs to use in my cures for the sick, and so I will be constantly hard at work."

"Is this the true reason?" and King Lindo gazed fixedly upon the face of Zampa.

But his face did not change as he replied:

"I was your brother's friend, I was Carriza's lover.

"Both are dead, and I wish not to be in your presence, further than duty calls me to serve my king."

Lindo turned pale at this reply, and a moment afterwards hotly:

"These are bold words, Zampa, to throw in the teeth of a Sea Gipsy king."

"They had best be outspoken, Lindo, than remain in the heart."

"I am no traitor to you, or to our laws; but I care not to be thrown constantly in your presence."

"If you are ill, I will minister to you as faithfully as to my own kindred, and I will do my duty to my king as a Sea Gipsy; but more do not ask of me, your twin brother's best friend, Carriza's lover, but I must refuse, be the result to me what it may."

Lindo was in a rage at this bold speech.

But he was politic too.

He saw that no one heard Zampa's words to him, and more, he knew the influence held by the young chemist.

Zampa had brought him through a dangerous illness a year before, and he knew his skill and knowledge of medicines and surgery, for he had gone for two years to Havana and there studied to learn all that he could.

To visit his anger upon the young chemist Lindo knew would cause trouble for himself, so closely following upon his usurping act and cruelty against his brother, and the sentence of Carriza to death, when it was in his power to have pardoned her.

"I can bide my time to strike this bold fellow," he muttered to himself, and so said:

"It shall be as you please, Zampa, only do not give public utterance to your bold words."

"Hasten after the Twelve, and bid them put the name Yampal upon the list, in your stead."

"Her brother?" said Zampa quickly.

"Yes."

Zampa bowed and departed, and he went at once to Yampal and told him the honor to be bestowed upon him, adding:

"But you will refuse, as I have?"

"No, I will accept," was the quick rejoinder of Yampal, and Zampa, his face white and indignant, walked away, muttering:

"Is he a coward, or has he some plot in this?"

CHAPTER XVII.

OMINOUS SIGNS.

THE new Council of Twelve were duly notified of the honor done them, accepted with thanks and entered upon the duties of their office, which were to simply obey the king's commands.

They were all young Sea Gipsies, wild and reckless most of them, and the wise-heads of the tribe felt that King Lindo was not acting wisely in dismissing his father's old advisers for men whom he could wield into his own daring moods without perhaps even a dissenting voice.

The next day after the Twelve were initiated, the surf-skiff, in which Kosta had gone to sea on that night of tempest, was sighted drifting far out upon the waters.

A vessel was sent out to pick it up, and so it was considered a certainty that the young prince had gone to the bottom of the deep, and must live only in the memory of his people.

Having gotten the reins of power firmly in his reckless hands, Lindo began to show that he meant not to remain an idle king, for orders were given to send a vessel at once to New Orleans, for all needed ship equipments, and another was dispatched on a northern cruise in search of heavy guns, to fortify the island at its few weak points, and to arm a trio of Gipsy cruisers.

The entire fleet too, was ordered to be put in perfect condition, and so the island became a busy scene of activity.

Again old heads were shaken, for what could it all mean they wondered.

It was the third night after the burial of Carriza, that Zampa went down to the little harbor shore one night, and got into the little surf-skiff which Kosta had gone forth to his supposed death in.

He carried with him a large bundle, which he placed in the bottom of the skiff, and seizing the oars pulled out of the harbor.

Near the entrance of the harbor a small skiff lay upon the sands, and landing, the young chemist dragged it into the water and set it adrift.

The tide was running out, and the boat went swiftly away through the channel, soon disappearing in the darkness.

The Gipsies were all inland, about their little cottage homes, or the plaza in the center of the island, where they were wont to gather by day and night in numbers, for recreation of various kinds.

No watch was kept upon the island, for none was needed, and an incoming Gipsy craft, if it was a stormy night, would fire a gun as a signal for the beacons to be lighted to guide her into the harbor.

So no one saw the departure of Zampa, nor did they see him set the skiff adrift.

When the drifting boat got out of sight, Zampa sprang into his own boat and went out to sea, as though in chase.

He soon came up with the boat, and running alongside seized the painter and took it in tow.

The night was cloudy, but the wind blew lightly and the sea was smooth, so Zampa held on his way at a good pace.

His course lay toward the Grave Isle, and, after several hours' hard rowing he ran into a small cove and was lost in the gloom of the overhanging rocks.

For an hour he was lost sight of, and then a boat shot into view once more.

But the surf-skiff was not in tow. With a strong stroke Zampa sent his little boat flying over the waters, back toward the Gipsies' Island.

The tide was now running back, so as to favor him, and he pulled with all his might, for he saw that a storm was gathering, and, though a skillful sailor, and knowing the channel well into the harbor, he had no desire to be caught out in rough weather.

Just as he reached the channel the storm broke, but he was safe, and pulled rapidly into the cove, where he left the boat upon the sands, where he had gotten it, and hastily walked along the shore back to his own cabin.

It was nearly dawn, and yet he sought not his couch, but paced to and fro, as was his wont when deeply moved.

"No one saw me, I am sure, and the fact that the surf-skiff, known by all for its shape as Kosta's, is gone, will but add to the superstitious dread my plot will produce," he muttered.

The winds now howled without, and the surf fell with deep roar upon the island's rock-bound shore, while the gray light of dawn stealing into the cabin windows warned him that he must seek rest, and he at last threw himself down upon his couch and sunk to sleep, just as the island was awaking to the work of the day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD.

THE busy work on the Gipsies' Island—but for what, no one seemed to know, unless it was the Twelve who held the secret intention of King Lindo locked in their own breasts—went briskly on, and the little fleet began to put on an appearance that showed the vessels off in all their trim beauty.

There were a score of fleet cruisers in the Gipsy squadron, sloops and schooners, ranging from twenty tons to one hundred, and there was not one of them but could show a clean pair of heels to almost any craft they met upon the seas.

Their hulls were sharp, shapely, and staunch, their rig strong and capable of spreading a great deal of canvas, and their crews were the best of seamen, men and youths reared upon the waters, and taught from childhood to become sailors with all that the word could mean.

There was a law among the Sea Gipsies that four times each year all the vessels of the band, and all the members, had to meet at the island.

So, no matter what duty a craft was absent upon, when one of those quarterly meeting times drew near the skipper would sail for the Gipsies' Island.

At such times the fleet would be overhauled and refitted, the earnings of each vessel would be turned into the Island Treasury, and orders for future cruising would be given the skippers.

It was at one of these meetings that the old king had died, so that Lindo had all of his people about him when he entered upon his term of power, and could therefore issue his orders to suit himself.

It was a surprise, therefore, to all the skippers when they were ordered to remain in port until the return of the vessels sent after arms and equipments.

It was a surprise, also, when three of the largest of the fleet had their sides pierced for guns, and their crews were trebled in number.

But no one dared question what their king meant to do, while many suspected that he meant to make his vessels openly what they had been in secret, freebooters, and this thought gave great pleasure to the younger ones of the tribe, while it brought forebodings of evil to the older people.

Several nights after the visit of Zampa to the Grave Isle, the Sea Gipsies, as was their wont, set out upon their monthly cruise to welcome the new moon.

If the sky was cloudless and the new moon appeared in all her beauty, a welcome was given her by all of the Gipsies getting into their boats, and with chants passing out of the harbor and rowing toward the moon until she sunk from sight.

Then, lighting lanterns in the prows of their boats they would turn back to their island, still chanting wild refrains in honor of the goddess of night.

Should clouds obscure the new moon, the Sea Gipsies would not go forth, and any undertaking that they had in view for that month would not be entered upon, as the shielding of Luna's face from them was a warning that they must not venture to carry out their plans.

The new moon appeared in cloudless beauty on the third night after the visit of Zampa to the Grave Isle, and the boats were all ready to go forth upon their welcome, and serve as an

escort until Luna sunk to rest beneath the watery horizon.

All who could go had to do so, and only the very aged and infirm, or ill, remained behind. The Gipsies went down to the shore by the hundreds and got into their skiffs, barges or yawls, and the oarsmen rested upon their oars awaiting the coming of the king.

Soon he appeared, and entering his barge, manned by twelve oarsmen, he took his seat in the stern, beneath the flag of his people that fluttered above him.

Behind him came two barges, with six oarsmen, and in these were the Council of Twelve.

Next followed the fleet in two columns, some of the boats having four oarsmen, some two, and a number with but a single man at the oars.

Among the latter was Zampa, and he was alone in his boat, and modestly took his place at the rear, though his rank would place him next to the barge of the Twelve.

Hardly a breath of air stirred the waters, and the night was balmy and beautiful.

Passing out of the harbor, the channel was soon navigated and the prows of the boats were turned toward the new moon, that was slowly sinking to rest.

As the barge of King Lindo pointed toward the Deity of the Sea Gipsies, a wild chant of welcome broke forth from a thousand throats, and wen swelling over the waters far away.

When the wind blew fresh and the sea was rough, the Gipsy fleet was composed of the score of sailing vessels of the fleet; but in light winds and balmy weather the boats were resorted to and oarsmen urged them on their way in place of snowy sails.

Over the long swells of the ocean the Gipsy fleet of boats held its way, the chant ringing forth in their welcome to the moon, and the column of boats was unbroken in their regularity, for the oarsmen had become as skilled as soldiers in keeping their place in line.

A league nearly had they gone when the crescent moon touched the sea.

Then there was sung a chant strangely like a lullaby, and until the last glimmer of light faded beneath the horizon, they were wont to keep this song up; but now, as though ordered by command of their king, the Sea Gipsies suddenly became silent.

The silence was ominous, startling and weird, and it was caused by a sight that suddenly met every eye.

Across the glimmering wake of the moon, full into the radiance, silvered by the last rays, had glided a boat with a single occupant.

The boat was white, and of a peculiar shape that all seemed to know, for its bows and stern rose high above the waters.

But the occupant?

Standing upright in the stern of the skiff was a form clad in white.

It had the appearance of a woman's form, and its hands held a double paddle, the blades of which were dipped into the water first on one side and then the other.

A white drapery fell about the form and seemed to trail in the water on one side of the skiff.

Having crossed the wake of the setting moon the skiff suddenly turned its prow toward the boat fleet of the Sea Gipsies.

It was not far away, and when the moon had set and the starlight alone fell upon the darkened waters, a halo, a strange, unearthly luster seemed to pervade the form, the skiff and the waters about it.

The Sea Gipsies were superstitious, and the hearts of brave men in that boat fleet, beat as rapidly with dread as did the hearts of the women and children.

There was no need of the king to believe it a hallucination, for he saw that every eye beheld it as did his own.

Not a word was spoken, not a whisper was heard, but scores of hands were outstretched, the index finger pointing to the spectral being.

One word would have been a relief to all, and yet no one spoke.

Thus the silence became painful, and it seemed that the one who held their vision also held them enthralled, without the power of motion. And slowly toward them, with a wavy kind of motion, came the surf-skiff, the double paddle swaying from side to side as the blades sunk into the sea.

Suddenly out over the starlit waters came a voice raised in song.

Many had felt that they had recognized that white-robed form in the skiff, revealed by the strange light that hovered about it, but the moment that the voice was heard a score of voices broke forth in a cry that was between a groan of anguish and a shriek of terror:

"Carriza's ghost!"

"Back to the island all!"

The words were almost shrieked from the lips of King Lindo, and every oar fell with a splash into the sea.

For an instant there was a scene of wild confusion, as the boat prows were being turned back toward the island, and then the oarsmen bent to their work with a will that terror added strength to.

"Carriza's spirit!" again came the cry, this time from the lips of frightened women, and they scarcely dared look back at the vision they knew was in their wake.

As the barge of the Sea Gipsy king sped along, striving once more to take the lead, and now from the fright of its oarsmen, it came upon the last boat of the fleet, and which had brought up the rear.

This boat was not in flight, and it had but a single occupant.

That one was Zampa.

He rested upon his oars, his face turned toward the phantom-like form in the surf-skiff.

"Ho, King Lindo, is it your will that I go on and solve this mystery?" cried Zampa, as the large barge drew near.

"What! would you be such a fool as to trifle with a spirit from the dead?" responded Lindo, in an angry tone, and with a voice that quivered with dread.

"I would obey your commands, King Lindo," responded Zampa.

"Then back to the island," was the stern command, and the barge swept on.

One by one the other boats passed him, and when the last had gone by, Zampa turned his prow also toward the island.

This brought his face toward the white-robed form in the surf-skiff, and he saw that the double paddle still moved, the weird light still hung about the mysterious being, and that the bows of her boat were now headed toward the Gipsies' Island, as though in chase of the little fleet.

And over the sea came the wild melody that had so startled the Sea Gipsies, for often had they heard Carriza's superb voice sing that same song, and listened to it in rapture, for many called her the Song-bird of the Isle.

Her form erect, her white robe trailing in the waters, her paddle keeping time to her wild song, she came on in the wake of the flying Sea Gipsies, until gradually the weird light seemed to grow dimmer and dimmer, and she faded from the view of the many eyes that were staring back upon her in deepest awe.

When the last sound of the voice had died away, Zampa muttered to himself, as he followed in the wake of the little fleet:

"Now, King Lindo, thy punishment begins, for from this night thou art a haunted man."

"Waking, sleeping, at sea, ashore, you cannot drive out of your brain the vision you have seen this night, the spirit of the dead, the beautiful girl whom you condemned to die by her own hand."

"No, no, thou canst never rid thyself of that specter form."

Upon his arrival at the shore near his home, Zampa found that all the other boats had beaten him in some time, and upon reaching his cabin he was met by Nunez, who said eagerly:

"I've been searching for you, Zampa."

"Well?"

"King Lindo wishes to see you at once."

Zampa laughed lightly, and Nunez said quickly:

"What! are you losing your mind with fright at what we saw, comrade?"

"No."

"Was it not awful?"

"It certainly was a most startling sight, Nunez."

"What do you think of it?"

"What can be thought of it, save that it was Carriza's ghost?"

"True, and so all our people believe."

"Do you not notice the silence in our homes, whereas we should be feasting and dancing, after our welcome to Luna?"

"Yes, a hush rests upon the island."

"No wonder, after what we saw; but you had better come to Lindo, and I would suggest you fetch some quieting herb drink with you, for the king is strangely nervous."

"No wonder, Nunez."

"So say I, after what all beheld."

"But we certainly sunk Carriza into the sea, Zampa?"

"I put the chains about the form myself, you remember?"

"Yes, Zampa, and Lunak was with us."

"Yes," and Zampa led the way toward the cottage of King Lindo.

On their way they met Lunak and he seemed terribly excited, while he cried earnestly:

"Comrades, stay, for the king seems mad, and I believe means to put us three to death."

"What is to be done?"

"I do not fear him," calmly said Zampa, and he walked on alone toward the quarters of the Sea Gipsy king.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HAUNTED SEA KING.

WHEN Zampa entered the presence of Lindo, the Sea Gipsy, he found him pacing to and fro, like a tiger in his cage.

His face was very pale and his lips compressed, and a frightened look shone from his eyes.

In spite of the words that Lunak had given utterance to, that King Lindo meant to take the life of the three who had carried Carriza out to

her grave in the sea, Zampa showed no atom of fear.

"You sent for me, Lindo?" he said, calmly, for it was the wont of those simple people to address their chief by his name, without title, when they chose.

"I did, and you have been an age in coming," was the angry retort.

"Are you ill?"

"Yes, at heart, and brain, yes; but in body, no."

"What can I do for you, for you do seem excited?"

"Name one of our people who are not?"

"I am not."

"Bah! nothing moves you, so used you are to seeing strange sights in your calling; but do you wonder that others tremble at what all saw?"

"Were the being of the earth I could face it; but that sight I beheld came to me as a warning of evil, Zampa?"

"I asked you to allow me to go and solve the mystery."

"And would you have gone alone?"

"It seems to me very evident that I would have to do so, for where their king fled in terror no one of our people cared to remain."

"You are often called to be with the dying, Zampa, so hold no fear of them."

"But answer me, did you not go with Nunez and Lunak out upon the sea with the body of Carriza?"

"I did."

"She was placed in the depths, as all our people are after death?"

"I enwrapped the form in chains and saw the white robe sink far down into the sea, till it was lost to our sight."

"Then the specter we saw to-night?" and Lindo asked the question in a whisper.

"It is said, King Lindo, that the soul can never die, for so teach the priests of Christianity."

"And can the soul take the form of the being while in life?"

"So it would seem, Lindo, from the specter we all saw to-night."

"And the voice, too?"

"Was Carriza's."

"Yes, for there was not one other such voice as hers in our time."

"No, Lindo."

"But why has she come back to earth in spirit form, Zampa?"

"Ask those who can read the secrets of the dead, king."

"But you know much, Zampa, for you are the wise man of our people."

"I can tell you of the living only, not of the dead."

"But can nothing be done to drive this haunting specter from our shores, Zampa?"

"I much fear me that the ghost of Carriza will not be the only one you will see."

Lindo gave a startled cry at these ominous words, and grasping the arm of Zampa asked eagerly and in a whisper:

"What do you mean?"

"Is there not an old legend among the Gipsies of the Sea that where a chief commits a great wrong, such as taking a subject's life needlessly, that he is haunted by the ghost of the one he has thus sent to a grave in the blue depths?"

"Ha! now I recall the legend; there is such a one, though I had forgotten it."

"But do you mean that I am to be haunted?"

"You saw a specter to-night, Lindo, and one and all recognized it as the ghost of Carriza."

"Do you dare to say that I put her to death wrongfully?"

"You had the power to pardon her refusal of your love."

"Alas! too true, Zampa; but you are a bold man to fling this in my teeth."

"Cowardice is not one of my sins, King Lindo."

"And you hinted that I might see another specter?"

"Kosta's."

"My brother's spirit?" and Lindo grew as pallid as a corpse.

"Yes."

"You charge me with his life also?" and there was a menace in the tone.

"Your punishment of him sent him to his death out in the tempest-lashed ocean."

The Sea Gipsy king fairly writhed under the words of the daring Zampa, and then he glared at him as though about to spring upon him.

But he refrained from doing so, for in the bold man before him he found a certain controlling influence which he could not overcome.

In his presence he seemed to dread less the awe-inspiring sight that haunted him.

Zampa seemed to have had no dread of that ghostly form in the surf-skiff, while all others of the tribe were then quaking with horror at the remembrance of the vision they had beheld.

"And should my brother's ghost appear, Zampa?" he asked, in a voice that perceptibly quivered.

"I will pity you, Lindo, for you will lead a

life of wretchedness, haunted by specters which even your kingly power will not send back to their graves in the ocean depths.

"I tell you, King Lindo, you will be a haunted man."

"Curses on you! do not add horror to that which I have already seen, but give me a potion, a drug that will bring slumber to my eyelids and drive from me all such horrid phantoms as your words conjure up."

"I would sleep, Zampa, a dreamless sleep, so use your knowledge in giving me such potion."

"In the broad glare of day I will see no such horrid phantoms; but in the shadows of night they will lurk, and so I must drive them from my heart and brain."

"Do you hear, Zampa? You must give me that which will bring oblivion to me, and I will bless you, for I am a haunted man, as you say, and I can see but madness before me if the grim specters are to dog my life."

Zampa quietly rested his fingers upon the pulse of the haggard-faced Sea King, and then said:

"Go to your couch, and when there take this powder in a goblet of wine."

"You will sleep soundly for hours."

"Remember, no waking up until the sunlight comes," pleaded the Sea King.

"No, you will sleep until dawn, now eight hours away."

"I will come and nurse you then."

"I will not die, I will awaken?"

"Yes."

"Good Zampa, you are my friend," and the Sea King wrung the hand of the man whom he hated and feared.

CHAPTER XX.

IN IRONS.

It certainly was a bitter blow to Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, to hear the stern order of the commander of the brig-of-war Sentinel to put him in irons.

He had gone to the rescue of the Sentinel, when she was dragging her anchors among the islands, and he knew would soon drive upon the Devil's Back Reef, and he had taken desperate chances to do so.

By remaining on the island he could, he knew, the next night swim with the tide back to the Gipsies' Island and secretly run off with a boat, in which he could make his escape to some port.

But he preferred to save the Sentinel and her crew, and his reward was to be put in irons and held as a deserter from the navy.

He admitted that appearances were against him.

He had boarded the brig in a most mysterious way, and his bare back was scarred by the whip.

But he would not tell that he was a Sea Gipsy, nor would he say that he had been thus cruelly punished by his own brother.

Preferring to say nothing, he hoped that Captain Danforth would permit him to go his way in peace.

But Leo Danforth was a severe commander, and ruled his vessel with an iron rod.

In those days a naval commander had more power than he has now, and he did pretty much as he pleased.

He could not but admit that he owed his life and the lives of his crew, as well as the safety of his vessel, to the mysterious man who had boarded him.

But he took the idea that the Sea Gipsy belonged to the navy, had been whipped severely for some crime and had deserted at night from his vessel, swimming to some island near which it passed.

Seeing his vessel he had swum out to it, knowing the waters well, and had rescued her in the hope of being set ashore free in some port.

This view he could not get out of his head, and when Kosta refused to speak of himself, he was determined to place him in irons to force him to do so, intending to release him when he reached port for what he had done for him.

So it was that he ordered irons brought and placed upon the daring man who refused to confess who and what he was.

"Will you speak, sir, or shall I order these irons put upon you?" said Captain Danforth, sternly, as the sergeant of marines appeared, with two men, bearing handcuffs and anklets of iron.

"I will not tell you who or what I am, sir," was the reply.

"Put the irons on him and carry him below," impatiently said Leo Danforth.

"Captain Danforth, I beg of you not to put this indignity upon me, sir."

"I have done you no wrong, and I have committed no crime, so I hope, for the service I have rendered you, that you will permit me to go my way in peace when you reach port."

The rich voice of the Sea Gipsy was full of pathos as he spoke, and his manner and words should have touched the heart of Leo Danforth.

But his was a nature not to yield, and he took it as a personal insult to him that Kosta refused to tell him what he asked.

So he said:

"Confess who and what you are, and the crime for which you were so severely punished, and I will give you full pardon and set you free."

"I have committed no crime, sir, and I will not tell you more."

"Put on those irons, sir!" came the stern command, and the sergeant stepped forward and clasped the handcuffs upon the wrists of the Sea Gipsy.

"Shall I put the irons on the ankles, too, sir?" asked the sergeant of marines.

"When you take him below decks, yes, and make him fast to a ring-bolt!" was the stern command.

Then turning to Kosta, he continued:

"When you are ready, sir, to make a full confession, ask your guard to send me word."

The Sea Gipsy smiled.

It was a grim smile, and it showed that he would be as unyielding as was the commander of the brig.

And so Kosta the Sea Gipsy was led away below decks and made fast to a ring-bolt in the floor, near his bunk, and it was with a moody heart that he sat down to ponder over how bitterly fate was treating him.

That he had the sympathy of the officers and crew, outside of the commander, he soon discovered, for they all realized how much they owed to him, and felt that their captain was showing a very cruel spirit toward a man to whom he owed his life, be that man whom he might.

A kind word here and there, and a wish that all would come well, did much to pour balm upon Kosta's wounded spirit, and he felt thankful for the words of comfort and the little favors bestowed upon him.

And so the brig held on her way toward Mobile; but ere she arrived at her destination a severe storm swept down upon her, for it was the stormy season, and night coming on, the prospect of remaining another day out of port was presented to the young commander, who was most anxious to get in.

The brig was leaking badly, from being strained in the last storm, and she sadly needed repairs, while, if the tempest approaching proved to be a very severe one he had fears for her safety in riding it out in his crippled condition.

He ordered the guns fired for a pilot, though he felt assured no pilot would come off in the face of the storm, and Leo Danforth began to feel very anxious, for though lying to, the brig was feeling the strain and her leaks were letting in water at a dangerous rate.

"The prisoner sends word, sir, that if you are firing for a pilot to run you up to port none will come off in the teeth of this gale, but he will take the wheel, sir," and Ferd Lucas, the handsome young midshipman, saluted politely.

"What! does he know these waters?" said Leo Danforth.

"He must, sir, to offer to be your pilot."

"It is some trick to get free," was the unnamable remark of the young commander.

"I think not, sir, for he heard the men talking of how badly the brig was leaking, and—"

"Go and bring him on deck, sir," cried Captain Danforth, as he saw that the seas were growing wilder and the winds were increasing in fury, while the brig seemed to be behaving badly.

CHAPTER XXI.

AGAIN TO THE RESCUE.

MIDSHIPMAN FERD LUCAS was delighted at the order given him, and he hastened away to obey it.

"The Grand Mogul wants you to save the ship, sir," he said in his light-hearted way, and he hastily had the irons taken from the feet of the prisoner.

Kosta smiled, and the midshipman continued:

"I told him you had said to me you could pilot the brig into port, and I guess he'll be good enough to set you free now, without wishing to know your antecedents."

So the midshipman led Kosta to the deck, and they confronted Captain Danforth as he stood near the wheel.

The situation of the brig was really becoming most serious.

The carpenter reported that she was leaking badly, the pumps being almost useless to keep her clear.

Then the gale was growing more savage each moment, and the locality of the brig was known to be a dangerous one.

The sea was growing rougher, and the vessel was laboring heavily, so that from commander to cabin-boy all felt anxious as to their safety.

"You know these waters, my man, so reported Midshipman Lucas to me," said Captain Danforth, the darkness alone showing the flush of shame that came to his face at having to ask the aid of the man he had illy treated.

"Yes, sir; I know them well, once I can get my bearings," was the quiet reply.

"And you can run the brig up to anchorage off the town?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is a black night and a rough one."

"That makes no difference, Captain Danforth, if you tell me just where we are."

The navigating officer was called and the position on the chart pointed out where the brig was.

Then the prisoner stepped to the wheel.

Captain Danforth turned away, and nothing was said about taking the irons off of his wrists.

Seeing this a lieutenant said:

"The man is still in irons, Captain Danforth."

"Let him remain so, for the quartermaster will take the wheel under his directions."

The lieutenant looked surprised, but said nothing, and advancing to where Kosta stood, said:

"I am sorry, my man, that I cannot knock off your irons; but the captain forbids it."

"And I could refuse to save this vessel, for well I know her danger, but for the sake of her officers and crew I will do my duty," was the stern reply.

Then Kosta took his position on the weather side of the two helmsmen, and his voice rung out loud and clear as he issued his orders to set what sail she could stand and to put her on her course.

"That man has a quarterdeck air about him, and I never heard a finer voice," said Lieutenant Ross Reddington, approaching his captain again.

"Why, Reddington, the man is nothing more than a foremast hand who has deserted, and perhaps has been a bo's'n."

"I never saw men so wild over one as my crew are about him," said Leo Danforth, impatiently, for his ears had caught many words in praise of the mysterious pilot, and he did not doubt but that his conduct toward the man was also censured.

But this made him the more stubborn in his resolve to get the better of Kosta.

"He saved our lives, Captain Danforth, risking his own to do so, and as he showed the signs of having been dealt with most cruelly, we all naturally feel for him most kindly."

"I am sorry you consider it necessary to keep him in irons."

Had any other man spoken as boldly as did Ross Reddington, Captain Danforth would have resented it at once.

But the young lieutenant who addressed him was a dangerous man to arouse.

He was a planter and had entered the navy from a love of the sea.

He was very wealthy, a most attractive man in appearance, and he had a record as a duelist in several affairs that had been forced upon him, that made men wary as to their words and conduct toward him.

Then, too, Captain Danforth owed him a snug little sum of money, and so he replied, instead of getting angry, or at least showing his anger:

"The fact is, Reddington, I am greatly interested in the man, and I wish to keep him, giving him a berth on the brig, for he certainly seems to know these waters thoroughly."

"I like him, and am trying to force from him a confession of who he is, what he is, and why he came on board here, stripped to the waist, and scarred by whip blows."

"I do not think he is the man to be forced into confession through your method, Captain Danforth; but I do hope you will give him his freedom when he runs the brig to an anchorage."

Leo Danforth made no reply, and Ross Reddington turned away, walking aft to a position near the pilot in irons.

Upright, calm and with his eyes searching the darkness about him, and seeming to see what no other man saw, for all was chaos about the brig on every side, stood Kosta, the Sea Gipsy.

His manacled hands were clasped in front of him, and his tall form and broad shoulders towered above the two quartermasters at the wheel.

Now and then he would give an order, in a low, distinct tone, and repeating it after him, the helmsman would promptly obey.

It was indeed a bad night, darkness that seemed impenetrable was about them, and under the little sail she had set the brig drove on like a race-horse.

The winds fairly seemed to lift her at times from wave-top to wave-top, and the seas were tumbling about her in threatening confusion.

Every eye was upon the mysterious pilot, and hearts almost stood still as they sped on in the darkness.

Could he see where he was driving at such a terrific speed?

That question was upon every lip.

Now and then, as he swept the black waters with his glass, Lieutenant Reddington would catch sight of the distant land, where a light twinkled in some plantation home upon the shore, and this gave him confidence in the strange pilot, who he felt read what he saw to guide him on his way.

The brig leaked badly, and the pumps were kept at work incessantly, so that all felt their danger and knew that life depended upon the man in irons, he who had before saved them from wreck and death.

At last a light glimmered ahead, and soon all saw that it was a beacon.

Then they gave a sigh of relief, for it told them for a certainty that their pilot was right.

Larger grew the beacon light, nearer drew the brig to it, and in half an hour more it was swept by to port, and the Sentinel, in quieter waters, went flying on toward the town.

Then ahead was seen a glimmer in the skies, and it was known to be a reflection from the lights of the town.

On, on, swept the brig, until like a swarm of fireflies the lights of the port were revealed ahead, and, having safely run the gantlet into port, the Sentinel shortened sail and went slowly along in search of an anchorage.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SEA GIPSY'S REFUGE.

"WELL, sir, you have again shown your skill and nerve," said Captain Danforth, approaching Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, as he stepped to one side, leaving the vessel in the hands of Lieutenant Reddington.

"I certainly have won freedom at your hands, sir, and I now ask it," and the tone was haughty in which the pilot responded.

"You are insolent, sir," said Leo Danforth, angrily.

"I do not see, sir, that you have any right to save your vessel through me, and still refuse me my freedom and permit me to go ashore."

"My fine fellow, you seem determined to bully me upon my own ship, and that I will not allow."

"I am willing to get you a pardon for what crime you have committed and to give you a berth on my brig, but you must confess to me all that I would know about you first, or I shall still keep you in irons."

"And this is your gratitude for what I have done for you, Captain Danforth?"

"I will show my gratitude when you have shown an humbler spirit, and not the defiant one you now exhibit."

"I neither ask gratitude at your hands, sir, nor reward."

"I have saved your vessel twice, for out in yonder rough sea, leaking as she was, you would have had trouble."

"You offered me gold, and gold I would not have for saving life."

"You accuse me of being a criminal, because I came on board your vessel with my back gashed from blows of the whip."

"I came of my own free will, and all I asked was to be allowed to go free."

"You demanded to know my name, where I came from, and what crime I had committed, and because I considered it best to divulge nothing regarding myself, you put me in irons, and kept me there, until you were very willing again to accept my services to save your vessel."

"Had she gone down you would have perished also, so you saved your own life with that of others."

"Bah! I care nothing for life, Captain Danforth, and did what I did for your officers and crew, not for myself, or for you."

He spoke the last words with perfect scorn, and Ross Reddington felt that they would anger Captain Danforth beyond endurance, and he regretted their utterance.

Nor was he wrong, for the young commander was in a rage at being thus defied upon the deck of his own vessel, and he said with revengeful earnestness:

"You have made up your mind to defy me, sir, and I have made my mind up that you shall not do so."

"What I ask you refuse to do, and I shall therefore show you that I am the master, you the man."

"Ho! a guard here!"

"What would you do, sir?" asked Kosta, with perfect calmness.

"Put you in double irons until I break that proud spirit of yours."

"Then I will prove to you that I am your friend."

The Sea Gipsy laughed. It was a mocking, defiant laugh, and his words came crisp and to the point.

"Captain Danforth, I came to you out of the sea, so I shall return the same way."

"Good-night, sir!"

With a mighty bound the Sea Gipsy sprang upon the bulwarks, and the next moment, ironed as he was, went head-first down into the rough waters.

A cry of horror broke from a number who saw his desperate act, while Leo Danforth was too much thunderstruck to move.

But Lieutenant Reddington quickly cried:

"He is in irons, and so must sink."

"Man overboard!"

Then came the orders to bring the brig up into the wind and lower away the boats.

But on the dark waters nothing was seen of the Sea Gipsy, who had left the brig as he had come—out of the sea.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FAVORITE OF A KING.

WHEN Zampa told Lindo, the Sea King, that

the potion he gave him would keep him asleep until morning, it turned out just as he had said, for when he opened his eyes the sun was shining brightly.

His head was a trifle confused at first, but Zampa was there to give him a powder that cleared the cobwebs from his brain, and Lindo felt like a different man.

He had been suspicious of Zampa, and had hesitated about taking the sleeping potion, for he feared that it might be intended that he should never wake up.

But the agony of remorse that he endured, at having seen the ghost of Carriza, and fearing to behold that of his brother, caused him to dash it off, and he soon sunk into a deep, dreamless slumber.

With the sunlight he felt not the dread that the night shadows brought, and he at once became his old self, and talked of the affair of the night before with an air of assumed indifference.

"What do the people say, good Zampa?" he asked.

"They are assured, sir, that they beheld Carriza's ghost."

"None but a fool would doubt that; but do they lay it to me?"

"You know Lindo, that no true Sea Gipsy censures his king."

"There may be some who are not true Sea Gipsies who might," was the cunning rejoinder.

"None such dwell in your tribe, Lindo."

"I am glad to hear this; but may it not have been the fault that Carriza's body was not properly buried, for in such cases they say the souls of the dead haunt the earth?"

"No, the burial was all right."

"Perhaps if I had Lunak and Nunez put to death it might rest the spirit of Carriza."

"And I must be put to death also, Lindo, for I was the one who had charge of her burial."

"No, no, no, we'll not say you, for I need you, good Zampa."

"Then blame not those who were my comrades."

"Well, we'll let that pass; but do you think the ghost will be seen to-night, Zampa?"

"I know not, sir."

"Yet you dread that my brother may return in spirit also?"

"He may, King Lindo; but of the land of the dead I have no knowledge."

"Well, Zampa, I will keep you near me, for I need you, and you must keep me a drug ever ready to take when the hour of my slumber comes."

"Hast plenty of the drug, Zampa?"

"Yes, Lindo."

"If not, you must send and get more, for do not get out of the drug, I implore you."

"Now, I will show myself among my people, that they may see that I have no fear of the ghostly visitor of last night."

"Coward!" muttered Zampa, as he walked back to his cabin.

"Coward that he will be when the shadows of night come on, though he is brave enough now."

And so King Lindo went among the people, blustering about from cabin to cabin, speaking lightly of the ghostly visitant they had seen, and saying that he meant to do all in his power to discover the reason of Carriza's leaving her grave in the sea to frighten women and children half out of their wits.

As the sun set that night Lindo grew nervous and he went into his cottage, which he had illuminated in every part.

Then he sent for his Council of Twelve, and they talked over the strange appearance of the sea spirit, but without any conclusion being arrived at, and all of them were as nervous about it as was the Sea King, only they had not his remorse of conscience to lie heavily upon their hearts and brains.

As soon as the Twelve departed, Zampa was summoned, and Lindo said:

"Do you fear this ghost of Carriza, good Zampa?"

"I fear nothing, King Lindo."

"What nerves you must have."

"Now, I fear nothing earthly, but that which comes from the Spirit Land I dread in a wonderful degree."

"But, as you do not, I wish to ask you to do me a favor."

"Well, Lindo?"

"How is the night?"

"Clear."

"And little wind?"

"Enough only for a pleasant sail, if you wish one."

"Me? Do you think I would take a sail, Zampa?" and the Sea Gipsy looked horrified.

"I thought that it was for that reason you asked."

"No, it was on your account."

"Well?"

"I would not see you lost at sea for the world, for, good Zampa, who would take care of me?"

Zampa saw the selfish motive in the Sea Gipsy's anxiety for him, and a smile of derision rested an instant upon his lips.

"What would you have me do, Lindo?"

"Take a light boat and what crew you will, and sail around the island to-night."

"To see if I discover Carriza's ghost again?"

"Yes."

"I will do so, but I prefer to go alone, for if I saw her my crew might wish to return, while if by myself I could do as I pleased."

"You are a brave fellow, good Zampa."

"But you must not get into trouble, remember."

"I will be cautious, King Lindo."

"Well, give me the sleeping potion now, and then start on your adventurous cruise."

"Perhaps it would be as well not to speak of it."

"So I think, sir."

The "potion" was then given to the Sea Gipsy king, and soon after Zampa sailed out of the harbor in his little boat, bound on his daring search for the Spirit of the Deep, as the Gipsies already called the apparition that had so startled them two nights before.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BLACK FLAG.

It was not dawn when Zampa ran back into the little harbor and sought his cabin for a few hours' rest before going to see King Lindo.

No one had seen him depart or return, for the Sea Gipsies kept well away from the water after having seen the ghost of Carriza on the night before.

The sun was well up when Zampa was awakened by a knock on his door.

"The king would see you, Zampa," said Lunak, who was the messenger.

"I will come soon, say to him."

"He wishes you to breakfast with him."

"Ah!"

"How much he thinks of you now, Zampa."

"Does he?"

"Indeed he does; but how was it that you saved our heads, for he meant to kill us, I am sure, as he said it was our burial of Carriza that had caused her to rise in spirit from the sea."

"Oh, I gave him a soothing powder, that was all," and hastily dressing, Zampa sought the home of Lindo.

The Sea Gipsy chief did not look happy.

He had that same heavy-head appearance as on the morning before; the effects of the drug he had taken.

But he welcomed Zampa with a smile, gave him a hearty hand-grasp, and quickly swallowed the antidote, or tonic, to drive off the sluggish, heavy feeling he had.

In a short while he was bright and talkative, and ate a hearty breakfast, which he insisted that Zampa should share with him.

Not once during the meal did he refer to where Zampa had gone during the past night; but soon after he led the way to his own room and quickly asked:

"Did you see her?"

"Yes, Lindo."

"You went, then?"

"Yes."

"In your sloop?"

"In my sea-skiff."

"Alone?"

"I went alone."

"When did you return?"

"An hour before dawn."

"You sailed around the island?"

"There was no need of it."

"Why?"

"She was off on the sea, in the direction of the Grave Isle."

The sweat stood in beads upon the face of Lindo, and Zampa saw that he was greatly excited.

"Tell me all," he urged.

"I ran out of the harbor, and—"

"Did any one see you go?"

"I saw no one."

"Nor return?"

"No one was in sight upon my return."

"Then your going is a secret between us?"

"Certainly; no one on the island, I believe, is aware of my going."

"Now, tell me."

"I ran through the channel and saw far out upon the sea, for the moon had not then set, a white boat, and—"

"The same?"

"Yes."

"And Carriza?"

"Yes; as before, she was in the skiff, but it was under sail."

"Under sail?"

"Yes, and the sail was as white as the boat and Carriza's shroud."

The Sea Gipsy King shuddered.

"And then?" he asked.

"I held straight on toward the phantom-like craft."

"You are brave, strangely brave, my good, my noble Zampa."

"The spirit craft did not fly at my approach, so I kept steadily on, and soon drew near."

A long sigh broke from the lips of Lindo.

"Did you see her?"

"Yes, she was seated in the skiff, which, as I drew closer, held on its way toward the Grave Isle, and—"

"You did not follow?"

"Oh, yes, but the skiff held its own."

"Did you hail her?"

"No."

"And you still pursued?"

"Yes, until near the island, when the skiff glided on ahead, and when I ran into the little cove, which you know of, the ghost of Carriza had disappeared."

Lindo groaned, and as he made no reply Zampa continued:

"After a short stay on the isle I returned to my boat and ran home before a good breeze that had sprung up."

"Did not the spirit utter a word, or sing, as on the night before?"

"I heard her laugh mockingly and utter two words."

"What said she?"

"I would rather not tell you."

"You must."

"She spoke your name—Lindo—then she said Death!"

Lindo started, sprung to his feet and paced the floor in an agony of remorse.

It was true that the iron was entering deep into his own soul, and he seemed to feel fully conscious of the crimes he had committed against both Carriza and his brother Kosta.

Suddenly he turned toward Zampa and said hoarsely:

"You are my friend, good Zampa, and you must not leave me, for I would go mad to pass a night without that drug that you give me to drown thought and dreams."

"In a few days I have something to tell you, and I believe then I can gain respite from the anguish I suffer."

"Be still my friend, good Zampa."

And Zampa left the presence of the Sea Gipsies' king with a smile of scorn upon his fine face, and wondering what was the secret that Lindo had to tell, and what it was that would bring him respite from remorse at his cruel crimes.

"If poor Kosta and Carriza were to appear before him to-day, in full life, he would be even more cruel toward them, for I know his nature," muttered Zampa, as he went on his way homeward.

So the days passed by, and the Spirit of the Deep still was upon every tongue, for others of the Sea Gipsies had seen her when coming in after nightfall from fishing.

It was certain that she haunted the Gipsies' Island, while she was always seen off toward the Grave Isle.

The superstitious fears of the Gipsies kept them off of the sea, and near their homes in the interior of the island, for none cared to look upon the shrouded form of poor Carriza, not even her parents, though several times Yampal, her brother, had gone out alone upon the waters to behold her, though he had returned, he stated, unsuccessful.

As for Lindo, he each night took the drug that drowned his senses, and by day began to drink heavily of the wines that the Gipsies had in abundance, though they were a most temperate people.

The vessels sent after equipments and arms returned in good time, and then it was that Lindo made known his secret to Zampa.

"I have determined, good Zampa, to sail the seas in an armed vessel, the Wind-Chaser, which was my father's vessel, and which my brother Kosta commanded."

"She is well-named, fleet as the wind itself, and I shall hoist over her decks the black flag."

Zampa started, and asked:

"Do you mean openly to float the pirates' flag, Lindo?"

"My flag shall be a black field with a silver crescent moon in the center, the goddess that we worship."

"I shall cruise the seas and my prey shall be vessels of all flags except the American, and the captains I place in command of the other two large vessels of my fleet, I shall order to obey the same rule."

"In action, in winning gold at the cannon's mouth, I can drive from me this specter that haunts me, and the Gipsy Corsairs shall be known and feared upon the seas."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

HAVING declared his intention of turning buccaneer in earnest, Lindo at once began his preparations to get to sea, and he was the more anxious to do so, as he hoped he would be free from the haunting specter of Carriza which he had seen.

He had urged Zampa to accompany him on his vessel, but this the young Gipsy doctor had no wish to do, and he told him that he would arrange his medicines so that he could take them himself, while his duty was to remain and look after the islanders.

O' this Lindo was convinced, and so he did not urge this matter, and was only anxious to get away from the island and its haunted waters.

"Do you think I will see her in other seas, Zampa?" he asked.

"I think not, Lindo, for it is but natural that Carriza's spirit should hover around near where her home was and her people dwell."

"It is very unnatural, and I only wish she was too deep in the sea for her spirit to rise."

"Now if it was a man's ghost I would not fear it so much."

"Not Kosta's even?"

The shot went home, for Zampa saw the start that the chief gave, and then came the words:

"I trust me Kosta's soul is at rest."

"I hope so, Lindo."

And thus the Sea Gipsy king kept Zampa ever near him by day, until the people wondered at the friendship between them, even greater than it had been between Kosta and the young doctor.

The three Gipsy vessels getting ready for sea, to cruise under a sable flag, were certainly beautiful craft, and all strangely alike in build and rig, for those wanderers of the waves had their own idea of a model, and a good one it was too.

They were sharp-bowed, lean-bodied, gaunt-sterned boats, carrying plenty of sail and capable of pushing through the water, be it smooth or rough, with wonderful speed.

It had long been a pet idea with Lindo to fit out a cruiser and skim the seas in her when and where he pleased, taking prizes to suit his own humor, and it was this determination that had made him prove treacherous to his twin brother.

Kosta, he knew, would not sustain him in it, and if his brother was king he could do nothing, he knew.

But, once he was king, he could wield the Sea Gipsies as he pleased.

So it was that he fought for the right to rule.

With several hundred daring, skillful sailors under his command, and fleet vessels, he would not fear any ordinary foe, while in a short time he felt that he could overrun the already full coffers of the Gipsy treasury.

With this aim in view, he had secretly purchased cannon and equipments, and when the vessels he had sent after them brought them to the island, he armed his three fleet vessels, and also placed a battery in position on shore, which commanded the entrance to the island, should any vessel dare venture in to attack them.

But Lindo was as cunning as he was cruel, and he meant not that the secret should go abroad that the Sea Gipsies were the sable flag buccaneers, as his red work should be done far away from where his people dwelt.

"Zampa, the Twelve are to remain in power, of course, in my absence, and you I wish to be known as commander, in case there is one badly needed for service, for there must be one head over all," had said Lindo.

"But I am not of the Twelve, Lindo," urged Zampa.

"It matters not, you are commander, and so you must serve me."

"In every-day affairs let the Twelve rule; but if there is trouble, or work for one bold brain or brave arm, you are the man, so say no more, for my people shall know my wish."

"I can but obey you," said Zampa, and then he added:

"We are happy here in our island, Lindo, our people are doing well, there is no strife among us, and we are very, very rich, so why will you not be dissuaded from turning sea rover, as you have planned to do?"

"Say no more, Zampa, for I am determined, and within three days I sail with my fleet."

Zampa said no more and went to his cabin, until darkness came on, when, as was his wont, he took the sleeping draught to Lindo and then left him.

Going to the shore, he sprung into his skiff and rowed out of the harbor.

Then he set sail and held on his course for the Grave Isle.

But by dawn he was once again in his cabin, no one knowing of his midnight visit to the little isle where was hidden a mystery deeper than the grave upon it.

The day following passed briskly away, the sound of the hammer ringing out in echoes among the rocks, as the workmen toiled upon the three cruisers.

With night all the Gipsies stopped work and went inland, none seeming to care to be near the shore when darkness came on.

And all wondered that Zampa, whose cabin was nearest the harbor shore, should not fear to dwell there, after the ghost of Carriza had been seen haunting the island.

Obedient implicitly their king, the Gipsies did not question his going to sea in the three armed vessels, while their greed for gold caused them to rather rejoice over the prospect of his lawless deeds upon the ocean bringing them greater riches.

In the old king's time many lawless acts the Sea Gipsies had doubtless committed, and wrecking and smuggling, with the occasional capture of a defenseless merchantman they had indulged in without doubt.

But now Lindo, their dashing, daring young

king, was adding zest to their lives by boldly demanding gold, by pressure of steel, "on and lead."

So, had Zampa urged against their piratical intention he would have been overwhelmed with voices crying down his moral tendencies.

When leaving the cottage of Lindo, the night following his mysterious run over to the Grave Isle, Zampa went, not to his cabin, but along the point of land which formed the right sheltering arm of the little harbor.

It jutted out into the sea quite a distance from the body of the island, and was heavily wooded.

It was here that the battery of heavy guns had been mounted, though, as there was no danger of attack, no guard even was kept there.

Entering the little fort Zampa gazed upon the sea spread out before him.

The young moon was yet a couple of hours high, and its rays fell upon a white object out upon the sea.

Nearer and nearer came the object until it took the shape of a white surf-skiff with snowy sail.

Into the dangerous channel it boldly took its way, and running in close to the point of land, luffed sharp and glided alongside of a large rock.

As it did so Zampa stood there and held forth his hand to the single occupant of the skiff.

That occupant was clad in a long white robe, and looked strangely spectral—in fact, it was Carriza, or—her ghost.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ESCAPE.

WHEN Kosta the Ocean Gipsy plunged into the waters, from the deck of the brig-of-war Sentinel, he was determined to die rather than again trust himself to the tender mercies of Captain Leo Danforth.

He knew well that he had done no wrong, and he acknowledged no man's right to demand of him his name and who he was.

That the Sea Gipsies were despised and feared by many he knew, as also that they were often branded by the name of buccaneer.

But could he tell that his twin brother's cruelty and treachery had caused those red scars upon his back?

No; and, after all he had done for Leo Danforth, he felt that he had no right to ask it of him.

He had made up his mind to spring overboard, did the young commander of the brig seek to return him to confinement below decks, and he had so headed the vessel, while directing the course she was to steer, as to bring her near a point of land that he felt he could reach by swimming, even with the manacles upon his wrists, for Kosta had perfect confidence in his strength and endurance in the water, as he had reason to have, for, when but a little lad his comrades were wont to call him the "Gipsy Fish."

When he reached the water he dove deep and swam under water for a long distance, heading toward the point of land which he had before his eyes when he leaped.

Upon rising to the surface he saw that the brig was quite a distance away, and also had luffed up into the wind.

The sounds on board told him that boats were being lowered to search for him, so he dove again, and swimming with his feet alone, held on as long as he could under water.

Then he lay on his back, floating quietly, while the boats searched over the rough, dark waters for him.

The wind was yet blowing half a gale, and the harbor waters were rough; but he cared nothing for that, and floated about at the will of the waves until he saw the brig fill away again and head for an anchorage half a mile further up nearer the town.

Then he began to swim shoreward.

It was no easy task, with his clothes on, his shoes, too, and his hands manacled.

But he steadily, though slowly, made headway, and at last his feet touched the bottom.

A minute more and he was out on dry land.

For some moments he stood there like a statue, as though in deep thought, while the water dripped from his clothing.

"Yes, I will seek his cot, and I believe he will befriend me, for he seemed most grateful to me the day I saved his life."

So he mused aloud, and then turned upon his heel and walked slowly along the shore toward a piece of timberland not far away.

As he approached the timber a light glimmered before him, and soon after the outline of an humble cabin home came into view.

Approaching the door, his step, light as it was, caught the ear of a dog within, and a savage bark was heard.

Unheeding the vicious reception of the dog, Kosta knocked at the door, and a man's voice within called out:

"Who is there?"

"This is the cabin home of Fenton the fisherman, is it not?"

"Yes, and I am Old Fenton; but who wishes me, for these are dangerous times to open one's doors to all comers?"

"I am he who once saved your life, when your fishing-boat was run down by a schooner."
 "Hail! know your voice now, Master Kosta."
 "Be still, Bounce; and you, child, open the door to welcome a friend."

Bounce, the dog, slunk away at the command of his master, as though ashamed at having mistaken a friend for a foe, and the one called *child*, a beautiful girl of eighteen, threw open the door.

The night was chilly, and a wood fire blazed upon the hearth, casting a ruddy glare through the room, which was large and comfortably furnished, with a door opening into other rooms on either side and at the rear.

Though after midnight, the occupants had been seated at a table eating, when the knock aroused them, for the old fisherman had returned home but a short while before, having been delayed by the storm, and found his dutiful daughter awaiting his coming with a hot supper.

An old man, verging on to three-score years, with a manly, honest face, and a tall, powerful frame, confronted Kosta as he stepped across the threshold of the door, which the maiden had thrown open.

Kosta half shrunk back as he beheld a beautiful girl before him, but the old fisherman stretched forth his hand and said bluntly:

"Come in, Master Kosta, and don't be afraid of my daughter, who will be only too glad to welcome one whom she has often heard me speak of."

"Give me your hand, sir, and let me grasp it again with one that would have been pulseless but for you."

In answer to this welcome Kosta stepped into the cheerful room; but, when the old fisherman held forth his hand, he held up his own to his view.

Had the hands of Kosta held a rattlesnake in them, it would not have created greater horror, for a cry broke from the girl's lips, while Fenton almost shouted the words:

"Great God! you in irons?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SPIRIT'S WARNING.

To the reader of to-day, it is, perhaps, hard to comprehend the dread of the supernatural that governed all classes and conditions of mankind, hardly more than half a century ago.

Even nowadays there are many who still believe in spooks and ghosts, and the rapid advancement in all sciences and civilization, the past two-score years, have about banished from educated minds the dread of superstition.

From the popular superstitions of their age the Sea Gipsies were wholly influenced, and for any of their band to have said that what they saw the night of their welcome to the new moon was not the ghost of Carriza, would have brought upon him only pity and anger for his temerity.

Fearless as they were of men, the daring Sea Gipsies quaked with terror before what they believed to be a visitant from the other world, and the dread held by Lindo of the spectral being was only greater than what his people felt in that he was the guilty one that had sent the poor girl to her grave, when, had he chosen to be merciful, as all hoped that he would be, he could have spared her.

His conduct toward Carriza brought remorse, and with the sight of the white-robed form in her skiff came the fear that his brother's ghost would next appear to him.

So it was that he shivered as with a chill when night's shadows darkened the sea and island, and he was only too glad to drink the drugged wine to its dregs, which would bring him oblivion until the sun should rise again to dispel the gloom.

He had taken the goblet handed to him and quaffed it with a vim that showed he knew what it would bring to him.

Then he sunk back upon his couch to sleep, not to dream, not to toss with feverish fancies haunting him.

So he thought; but was it that the drug was losing its power over him, or that the dose had not been as large, which Zampa had given him, for he grew restless as the hours wore on.

His cottage was in perfect quiet, for his servants had gone to their beds.

The whole Gipsy village seemed lost in sleep and only the sound of the surf upon the shore broke the stillness, while the wind sighing a lullaby through the pines soothed to slumber.

Yet, contrary to his usual custom of late, King Lindo lay not in quiet, dreamless sleep.

He tossed wearily and moaned as though in pain.

He kept his lamp burning brightly, and it revealed that his eyes often unclosed and he gazed about the room in a startled way.

Then he would raise his hands, as if appealing, and again they would fall to his side.

Several times he attempted to rise, but the effort was unsuccessful.

Then his lips moved, as though he would cry out; but only a moan came from them.

Presently the door of his room slowly opened and a form glided in.

The lamp shone brightly upon the intruder,

and revealed the very white-robed form which, half an hour before had landed from the surf-skiff upon the rocky point of land.

The drapery about the form was long and shroud-like, and masses of ebony hair hung about the shoulders and far adown the back.

The beautiful face was white as marble, and seemed as cold; but the eyes seemed fairly to be living wells of fire, so brightly did they glow.

Sweeping noiselessly across the room, Carriza, or her ghost, stood by the couch of Lindo.

His eyes were now wide open, and they were fixed upon her with a stare such as a dead man might fasten upon anything.

He lay motionless, but his hands were clinched and his teeth set.

Down upon him gazed the weird creature, and then one arm was raised and held over him.

A moment of deathlike silence, and slow, distinct, yet sepulchral in sound, came the words:

"Lindo, traitor King of the Sea Gipsies, I come from my deep-sea grave to warn you of breakers ahead in the course that thou art about to steer."

"On the rock that thou shalt dash is a gallows firmly fixed, and the noose is ready to inwrap thy neck."

"Be warned! haul down that sable flag, on which thou hast placed the silver crescent moon of thy people, and be content as thou art now."

"Thou art rich, thy people are content; then be warned and go not upon the seas to rob and murder."

"Thy gold will be bloodstained, and for every life thou dost take a groan of anguish will be wrung from thy heart when thou comest to the gallows."

"Live on content, as now thou art, Lindo, treacherous king, and bear thy remorse as best thou canst, but add not other crimes to thy name, to be reckoned against thee by those who will hunt thee to thy death."

"Out of the sea depths, where thou didst send me, have I come to warn thee of thy fate if the sable flag floats over the decks of thy ships."

"Heed my warning—farewell!"

The white-robed form slowly retreated from the room, and with a wild cry of fright Lindo sprung from his bed.

But his limbs would not sustain his weight, and he sunk in a swoon upon the floor.

Just then into the room came Zampa.

He stepped quickly to the silver goblet, which stood upon the table by the side of the couch, and dropped in it a powder.

Then he raised the form of Lindo from the floor and placed him upon the bed, at the same time applying restoratives, which soon brought him to consciousness.

"Oh! Zampa, it is you, then?" he cried, clutching the hand of the young Gipsy doctor, as his eyes fell upon him.

"Yes, Lindo, I was walking near and heard your cry, so came in to find you prone upon the floor."

"You did not drink all the drug, surely, or you would not have awakened."

"Yes, I drank it all, see—!"

"No, there are dregs here in the bottom of the goblet, so that accounts for your waking so soon."

"Zampa!"

"Well?"

"She was here."

"Who was here, King Lindo?"

"Carriza's ghost."

"Nonsense!"

"I say she was here; she came in yonder door, white as death itself, robed in her snowy shroud, and with her long black hair falling about her."

"She stood there, where you now stand, and she warned me, Zampa."

"Against what did she warn you, Lindo?"

"To haul down my sable flag, and not to become a buccaneer."

"You will heed her warning?"

"No!" and he almost shrieked the word.

"No, I will not heed her, for in the mad life I intend to lead can I only find escape from her haunting face."

"No, I will go to sea this coming day, and if, as she says, a gallows awaits me, then I will accept my fate."

"I will not be driven from my purpose, Zampa, I swear it."

"Now give me that drug and let me find the deepest oblivion, and when I awaken I will set sail with my fleet, so that when night comes on I will be far from here, where her spirit form will not follow to haunt and drive me to madness."

"There, good Zampa, I thank you," and dashing off the goblet's contents, Lindo sunk back upon his couch, and was soon in deep oblivion, while Zampa stood near regarding him, a strange expression the while resting upon his stern face.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GIPSY CORSAIRS.

THE Sea Gipsies were somewhat surprised the next morning when the king arose to suddenly hear orders to get the vessels ready for sea at once.

They had expected them to sail within three days, but could not understand this sudden determination of Lindo to sail immediately.

Had he received news in some mysterious manner that caused this quick departure, they wondered?

As for Lindo he vouchsafed no explanation.

He awoke with a full realization of what had happened the night before, and he was thoroughly determined that darkness should not catch him on the island.

Once he was away he hoped to be free from the haunting specter of Carriza.

In desperate scenes and danger he trusted that he could drown all thoughts of her.

The warning she had given him, her words regarding a gallows awaiting him, in his desperate fear he did not dread so much as he did the thought of seeing her ghostly form.

And so decks were cleared, stores hastily put on board, and toward evening the three vessels were ready to sail.

It was a clear day, with the wind blowing fresh, and the little pirate schooners seemed anxious to fly away over the waters and begin their unlawful career of piracy.

At their peaks floated the black flag, with the silver crescent in the center, and at the fore of Lindo's vessel were his own colors, the red field with gold cross-swords in the center and silver anchors in the four corners.

His schooner, the Wind-Chaser, was indeed a beautiful craft, and with her speed, a battery of nine guns and a crew of eighty men, she would be a formidable foe.

The next in size was the Sea Gipsy, the vessel which Lindo himself had commanded during his father's life, and she carried seven guns and sixty men.

The Sea Cloud was the third, and smaller still than the Sea Gipsy; she carried six guns and fifty men.

The three vessels had been the property of the old king and his sons, his being the Wind-Chaser, the Sea Gipsy belonging to Kosta, and the Sea Cloud to Lindo, but, as the old king had given up the sea, Kosta had commanded the Wind-Chaser, and the Sea Gipsy had been the cruiser of Lindo, the third vessel being kept at the island for any service that she might be needed for.

When ready to sail, the whole tribe assembled on the point of land where Zampa had met Carriza's specter the night before, to see them off and wish them *bon voyage*.

The crews, in their neat uniforms, sprung to their posts, the order was given to get up anchor and set sail, and in a few moments more the trio of pretty craft were heading out of the harbor.

But, up to the time they reached the channel, a fair breeze had been blowing.

Then, to the surprise of all, it suddenly lulled, there barely being wind enough to fill the sails and give the craft steerage-way through the treacherous channel.

Standing on the quarter-deck of the Wind-Chaser, which was leading, Lindo turned pale as he saw this lull of the wind.

The cheers of the Sea Gipsies on shore ceased, as they saw the sails flap and the schooners lose headway.

"It is coming in from another quarter," said Yampal, addressing Zampa, by whose side he stood on the point of land.

"I do not think there will be a dead calm; but if so the vessels will have to tow out of the channel, as it would not do to anchor there."

"I think the breeze will come in from the south after sunset" and Zampa was looking about him as he spoke with the air of a thorough weather-reader.

As he had surmised, the breeze did not utterly die out, but there remained just sufficient to keep the three schooners under fair headway.

With the breeze from the quarter where it was, and the tide setting along the island, the fleet had to head straight toward the Grave Isle to get a good offing.

As he saw this, Lindo grew strangely nervous, and paced the deck with rapid tread.

As the sun drew near the horizon the three vessels were about midway between the Gipsies' Island and that on which was the grave of the mother of Lindo and Kosta.

Then the crews of the three schooners began to grow nervous, for they had not forgotten the appearance of Carriza's ghost.

"Now head southward, Lomax, and see if we cannot round the island from where we are," said Lindo, with an uneasy glance at the Grave Isle.

The course of the Wind Chaser was changed, and she went slowly along, with barely wind enough to keep her moving.

The other two craft followed her example, and thus the three drifted until the sun went down.

Then all hoped for a stronger wind, and anxious looks were cast to the four quarters of heaven, to catch the first breath of a coming breeze.

And anxious eyes, too, were turned toward the Grave Isle, dreading to see a white skiff gliding out from among its shadows.

With the setting of the sun, as if by mutual thought, the Sea Gipsies on the point of land all turned, with two exceptions, and went back into the island.

There was no one to suggest it, but all seemed to dread getting a view such as they had once had out on the sea.

The two exceptions were Zampa and Yampal.

The latter would have gone with the others, but the former said simply:

"Stay."

And there they stood until the sunlight had died and the moonlight reigned supreme over the sea, Zampa with a powerful glass to his eye, sweeping the waters.

At last he said:

"She is heading out toward the fleet."

"Carriza's ghost?"

"Yes."

"Do they see her?"

"They soon will, if they do not now; but feel that! the wind is coming up as I thought it would and they can run away from her."

And out on the fleet men scarcely dared look toward the Grave Isle.

They saw their people turn from the shore, and knew well the cause, and then, with laugh and jest they tried to drive away the dread creeping upon them.

But there was one who had gone to his dimly-lighted cabin, not daring to remain upon deck in the moonlight.

And that one was the greatest coward of them all—their king.

Suddenly he heard his name spoken:

"King Lindo!"

"Well?" he said, harshly.

"Please come on deck."

"What is wanted?"

"It is important."

He dared not show the coward before his people, for the Gipsies held a law among them that a coward king could be put to death.

True, naught was said in this law about the cowardice being from dread of the supernatural, and of which all were afraid, but then he dared not let them see that he feared to leave his brightly-lighted cabin.

And so he ascended to the deck, and Lomax said in a whisper:

"She is coming."

A hush had fallen upon the crews of each vessel, and stillness reigned supreme.

There was not a ripple upon the waves, and the well-rigged vessels gave forth no creaking sound.

The silence was depressing, and awful in its intensity.

As Lomax spoke he pointed off toward Grave Isle.

There, yet a long way off, was visible a white object upon the waters.

"It is Carriza's spirit," whispered Lomax.

"She is coming toward us," said another officer, also in a whisper.

Lindo did not speak—he did not move.

He leant against the taffrail, his face turned toward the specter, but his eyes were tightly closed.

He seemed to be going mad, he felt an oppression on brain and heart that was fearful.

He could not speak, he could not move, and it seemed that he must die.

Several times Lomax asked:

"Do you not see her, sir?"

"There! one point off the end of the boom."

He made no reply.

He could not.

Then the spell was broken, for a breath of wind fanned his face, and a glad chorus of voices rung out from nearly two hundred throats as a stiff breeze came rippling over the waters.

The sails filled, the schooners bent gracefully and went skimming along on their course, leaving the specter far astern of them.

Then Lindo regained his fading senses and felt like another man.

Fate had not wholly deserted him, and the Gipsy Corsairs were embarked on their lawless career.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

It was when Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, was lying at anchor in the port of Mobile, one night, a year before the time that the Sea Gipsies are presented to the reader, that he had saved the life of Old Fenton, the fisherman, as was called the man to whose cabin the fugitive in irons went for refuge after his escape from the brig-of-war Sentinel.

It was during a storm, and Kosta was pacing the deck of the Wind-Chaser, which was then on her first cruise, trading from port to port.

Fenton was in his skiff, struggling to reach port with his heavy cargo of fish, when a lubberly trading-schooner ran him down.

Kosta saw that the old fisherman seemed hurt and unable to help himself, so he called to his crew to lower a life-boat while he sprang boldly into the sea.

He reached the fisherman just as he was drowning, for, half-stunned by a blow on the head, he was unable to help himself.

Supporting him until the life-boat came up, Kosta and the man he had saved were taken into it, and were soon after in the cabin of the schooner, while the craft that had done the damage had gone on, unheeding the damage done, and dropped anchor above the town.

Fenton soon felt himself, once again, and he was profuse in his praise of Kosta and his gratitude.

He said that he had had a valuable cargo of fish on board, and it, with his boat, were a total loss; but he was thankful for his life, and supposed the schooner's skipper would help him out.

Kosta gave him dry clothing and took him to his little cabin home, when the storm blew over, and the next day visited him there to see if he was all right.

"I am all right, Captain Kosta, but the schooner's skipper refused to pay me a dollar, and cursed me for going to him about it."

"I am a poor man, sir, though once I was rich, and was captain of a large clipper ship; but she was taken from me by pirates, and I had to take to fishing for a living, for I have a little daughter to care for and to give an education to, for she is now in New Orleans at boarding-school."

Such was the story told by the old man, and in reply Kosta had said:

"I saw the accident, and the skipper of the schooner was wholly to blame."

"He was at the helm himself, and rather than go about, he ran you down."

"He must pay you, sir."

"But he will not, and he and his crew drove me from his vessel this morning."

Kosta said simply:

"I will see him for you."

"It will do no good."

"I can but try," and Kosta took his leave.

That night a boat left the side of the Wind-Chaser, and in it were a dozen men.

"Schooner ahoy!" called out Kosta, who was in the stern, as they drew near the schooner which had run down the old fisherman.

"Ahoy the boat!" came reply.

"I wish to see your captain on an important matter."

"Ay, ay, come alongside."

A few moments more and Kosta entered the cabin of the schooner.

Her skipper was there, a man with a wicked face and savage eyes, just such a face for one to possess who would wrong a man and treat it as a jest.

He looked up as Kosta entered and said quickly:

"Well, sir, what business have you with me?"

"You are the master of this craft, I believe?"

"I am master and owner; what then?"

"You ran down a fishing-boat yesterday."

"That is none of your affair, sir."

"You are mistaken, for I am here to make it my affair."

"Who are you?"

"One who will see justice done a poor old man, whom you very nearly caused the death of yesterday, and whose property you destroyed."

"The old fool was in my way."

"You are mistaken, for he had the right of way, and you deliberately ran him down."

"I will stand no interference in the affair from you, sir, so leave my vessel," said the skipper in a threatening tone.

Kosta smiled, and replied:

"I am here to demand of you, sir, the value of that man's boat and cargo—I will call it two hundred dollars."

"Not a dollar will I pay."

In an instant he was covered with a pistol, while Kosta said calmly:

"You will give me the sum I name, or I will take your vessel out to sea and set her on fire, turning you and your crew adrift in your boat."

"I have a dozen men on deck, all armed, so obey, or take the consequences."

"You are a cursed pirate," groaned the man, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Yes, if so you will; but I am robbing a thief and a murderer at heart."

"I have not the money."

"Send ashore and get it then."

The man saw that Kosta was not to be trifled with, so said:

"Perhaps I can raise it among the men."

"The men do not keep your money."

"Out with it, for I'll ask you no more."

"I've got some money here, but it is not mine."

"That is none of my business."

"I want two hundred dollars and at once."

The man counted it out, and then threw it on the table.

Kosta took it, looked it over and departed.

Half an hour after the old fisherman had his money, and the Wind-Chaser was on her way out to sea, while Kosta little dreamed as he stood on her deck that Fenton would ever be

called upon to return the favor done him, as he had said he would if ever called on by the Sea Gipsy.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

THE tone of Fenton, the fisherman, when Kosta held up his manacled hands before him, indicated amazement and sorrow combined.

That the Sea Gipsy wore manacles seemed to indicate but one thing in the mind of both the daughter and the father.

That he must be a criminal they could only believe.

But Fenton was not one to go back upon his word, and owing his life to the Sea Gipsy he was willing and anxious to do all in his power for him in his distress.

"My good young friend, what does this mean?" he said, anxiously, as he grasped his hands, ironed though they were.

"And you are all wet, too," he added.

Kosta looked fixedly in the face of the old man and then at the daughter.

Then he said:

"Because I come to you in irons, like a criminal, am I unwelcome, Señor Fenton?"

"A thousand times no! not if you came as a murderer, a thief, flying from justice, for I am not one to forget all that I owe you, Captain Kosta."

"Will you take my word for it when I tell you that I am not a murderer, nor a thief, nor a fugitive from justice?"

"I am rather a fugitive from injustice."

"I have done no wrong, and yet I come to you in irons."

"I am here to ask you to free me of these hated manacles, and to believe me to be what I say I am, innocent of wrong."

"More I cannot say."

"More you need not say, sir."

"You trust me, then?"

"Implicitly."

"And your fair daughter?"

"I trust you, too, sir."

And Ruby came forward and offered her hand.

She knew all that she owed to Kosta, as the one who had saved her father's life and forced the man who wronged him to pay for his boat and its cargo.

Often in her prayers had she offered up a word for Kosta.

And now he stood before her, and in irons.

Who he was her father had never known.

He had said that he supposed him to be a coast-planter, in his own plantation pleasure-boat, for so the Wind-Chaser looked.

Kosta he knew was his name, and he added the prefix of captain.

More he did not know.

Now, after a year he returned, wet, haggard-faced, for he had suffered deeply since his father's death, and wearing heavy manacles upon his wrists.

A more magnificent-looking man Ruby Fenton had never beheld, and she was at once attracted toward him by the fascination of his dark, handsome face and glorious eyes.

So she had said what she did:

"I trust you, too, sir."

Then she added:

"And I am so glad to be able to thank you for my father's life, and I hope we now have a chance to show our gratitude."

"Come, child, let us get these irons off the gentleman's wrists, and then we can talk."

"Get me my tool-box."

Ruby quickly brought it, and seating himself in front of the Sea Gipsy, the old man began work in a skillful manner to file off the irons.

It was a long and tedious task, but when he tired of it, Ruby took the file and worked away at it, until at last they were cut in twain, and Kosta sprang to his feet, his lips muttering a fervent blessing.

Then he sat down and had supper, dry clothing was laid out for him by Ruby, and, as it was approaching dawn, they all sought rest, the Sea Gipsy being given a pleasant little room, which the next morning he discovered was that of the fisherman's daughter.

But Ruby had found pleasant quarters elsewhere, and was up early and had a good breakfast prepared.

"I'm not as poor as I was, captain, when last I saw you, for you see I have half to my little cabin, and improved things generally."

"The fact is, I was off in my smack one night when I discovered a vessel under sail, backing and filling, and acting in a queer way generally."

"I ran down to her and found not a soul on board."

"She was a foreign craft, a Cuban, and had a cargo of coffee, while she was stanch and brought me a good price, for I ran her up to port, and of course she became my prize."

"I fixed up my house, as you see, brought my daughter home to live, and bought me a snug little sloop that brings me a fair income as a trader along the coast."

Kosta listened to the story of the old sailor with interest, and congratulated him upon his better fortune, after which he said:

"On the contrary, Captain Fenton, fortune has turned her back upon me, for I have no home, no people, and am penniless; but I am young, have good health, and can, I hope, win my way in the world."

"Make a start as mate of my sloop, sir, for the berth is open to you."

"I have but four in crew, but they are good fellows, and the craft is stanch and fleet."

"I am getting along in years, and am willing to put the labor on younger shoulders, so don't refuse me, but say you'll ship as my mate."

"As frankly as you make the offer, so will I accept it, Captain Fenton."

"Good! and I'll tell you what I wish you would do."

"Well, sir?"

"I have a cargo loading for New Orleans, and I hate to leave my daughter alone for weeks at a time, while, by being here I can earn a little money at my old work of fishing."

"In fact I was out all day yesterday and got a good lot that will sell well to-day in the town."

"Now you take the sloop, the Ocean Ruby I call her, and run her to New Orleans and back, while I stay here."

"You really wish it, sir?"

"You will be doing me a favor by taking my place, and I'll pay you all I can afford as skipper."

"You are willing to trust me, though I came to you last night ironed like a felon?"

"We won't speak of that, sir, for I trust you in all things."

"And I would be glad if you would be skipper of the Ocean Ruby, sir, in my father's place, for he is getting old, and should take some comfort at home," said Ruby.

"I accept the berth; but for reasons I cannot explain, I do not care to be seen in port, as the vessel from which I escaped last night is here now, to undergo repairs."

"It is the brig-of-war Sentinel, and— Hal! there come some of her crew now, and they are evidently searching for me," and gazing out of the window the old man and his daughter saw an officer and seamen approaching the cabin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SECRET REVEALED AND YET A SECRET.

WHEN Kosta the Sea Gipsy, from his seat at the breakfast-table, had discovered the approach of the party from the Sentinel, he had spoken with the utmost calmness; but his face grew stern and determined.

Ruby had sprung to her feet at his words, and her father also quickly arose.

The party had landed a couple of hundred yards away from their boat, and an officer and four men were approaching the cabin.

"You do not wish to see these men, do you?" asked Ruby quickly.

"I do not, for I wish to avoid trouble with them," was the calm reply.

"Then step into my room, where you slept last night, and leave all to me," she said quickly.

"I do not yet wish to seem to hide, or fly from them."

"You do neither; only do as I say," she urged.

Kosta bowed acquiescence and entered the room.

Then she hastily took his clothing, that was drying before the fire, and put it out of sight, and as quickly removed from the breakfast-table the indications that a third person had been present at the meal.

The growl of Bounce without, and a stern command to him, caused Skipper Fenton to open the door, and his start of surprise was well feigned when he saw before him a young midshipman and four seamen.

It was Ferd Lucas, and ever polite to gray hairs he saluted courteously and said:

"Beg pardon, sir, but we are in search of a person who escaped from the American brig-of-war Sentinel last night, and though in irons, he was seen to reach the shore by a fisherman and come in this direction."

"Can you tell me anything regarding him?"

"I cannot, young officer," was the reply.

"The fisherman said that he supposed he had taken refuge in your cabin here, and my orders are to fetch him back, dead or alive, and I hope I will not have to do so, notwithstanding my orders."

"Did you say that he was a deserter, sir?" and Ruby came forward.

Ferd Lucas was a gallant fellow, and, for his years, just eighteen, was a great admirer of feminine beauty.

He saw before him an exquisite form, a lovely face, and a maiden who was the very kind to win a young sailor's heart.

Instantly his cap was off and he bowed low.

"A deserter, miss, he was, and yet not a deserter, for we had no right to hold him, and, frankly, miss, I am glad I can tell you nothing of him."

"From what you say of him, sir, you lead me to think you speak of one who is persecuted, and in such case, if I knew, I would not tell you whether he was."

"But how, miss, may I ask?"

The midshipman shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"His name, country and creed no one on the brig knows."

"To tell you his story, we got into a bad locality among the islands, were caught in a storm at night, and not daring to run dropped our anchors."

"Suddenly I heard in the darkness and storm a hail."

"No boat was near, we were not within hail of land, so we thought it was a spook, when all of a sudden a man boarded us, coming over our bows on a mighty wave."

"It was the man I am sent in search of."

"He was a tall, splendid-looking fellow, stripped to the waist, and his back was bleeding from cruel blows of the cat-whip."

"He told us that we were dragging our anchors fast and were going stern first upon a reef, and he piloted us out of our danger."

"A noble man, indeed; but you say his back was scarred with the whip-lash?"

"Yes, miss, and badly so; but he would give no name or country, nor tell aught about himself, and so our high-tempered captain put him in irons to force him to speak."

"Your captain is a brute, sir," indignantly said Ruby.

"Were a man to say that, lady, I would cross swords with him, though I agreed with him," said the midshipman, gallantly, and Ruby laughed.

"And then, sir?" asked Skipper Fenton.

"We sailed for this port, but got caught below last night in the blow, and having no pilot dared not run up, which made us most anxious, for the brig leaked badly."

"The mysterious stranger said that he knew the waters and would act as pilot, and he did."

"I do not think Captain Danforth meant to be severe with him; but he wanted to know the man's history, and offered him pardon—"

"For what?"

"Well, nobody knows; but his being whip-scarred caused us to believe he had committed some crime, and the captain said he would pardon him and give him a berth on board."

"And the stranger?"

"Refused, miss, and not willing to go below in double irons again, he leaped into the sea."

"Brave man!"

"He's all of that, miss; but we lowered the boats and lay to searching for him, so gave him up as drowned, especially as his hands were manacled, when an old fisherman came off this morning and said he had seen a man swim ashore and come down toward your home last night."

"Well, Sir Midshipman, I hope you will not find him," said Ruby.

"Egad! miss, but I hope the same, for a manlier man I never saw, be his sin what it may, though I am half-inclined to feel that he has been more wronged than sinning."

"Good morning, miss, and if you would like to visit our brig some day, to see just what a vessel-of-war is, I would be glad to welcome you and your father."

"My name is Ferd Lucas, and I'm only a midshipman, with great hopes of being a commodore before I die."

"My name is Foster Fenton, sir, and this is my daughter, Ruby."

"I am but a poor skipper, sir, but will be glad to give my child a look over your pretty vessel some day, while any honest sailor is welcome in my house."

The midshipman raised his hat, and, with an admiring glance at Ruby, walked back to his boat, leaving the father and daughter gazing after him.

"A gallant young fellow, that, my child."

"Yes, father, and with a good heart."

"The secret is out, then?"

"What secret, father?"

"About our guest."

"Well, yes, sir; he revealed why our guest was a fugitive, and why in irons: but yet who is Captain Kosta, father, for that yet remains a secret, and why was he so punished?"

"I cannot tell, my child; but I feel, as said the midshipman, that he is rather the victim of a wrong than one who has committed a crime."

"So do I, sir; but I will call him, and he had better join the sloop as she runs out to-night, sir, as to go up to her anchorage might cause his capture."

"You are always right, Ruby."

And so it was decided, and Kosta went out in a boat accompanied by the old skipper and Ruby, and boarded the pretty sloop as she sailed by the home of her master.

Farewells were said, and Kosta found himself the commander of a snug little craft, and felt that the tide of fortune had turned in his favor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LEGACY FROM THE GRAVE.

THE little sloop upon which Kosta had sailed as master, was of forty tons burden, with a sharp bow, narrow stern and good beam, qualities that gave her both speed and stanchness.

She carried ample canvas for her tonnage, in fact more than was necessary, except in case of a chase, and was readily handled by her crew of four men.

The crew had gazed with some curiosity upon their new skipper, when the old master had brought him on board, and a glance was sufficient to show them that he was no man to cringe with.

Once the sloop was under way, they discovered that he knew his duties, and theirs as well, and expected them to execute his orders.

They liked him, for he had a kindly manner, and they wondered greatly where the old skipper had found the new one.

A fresh breeze had sent the Ocean Ruby bowling swiftly along, and her captain was at the helm, as though anxious to acquaint himself with the workings of his new vessel.

The crew were forward, discussing Kosta in a low tone, and to his credit be it said.

And he, musing over the past, said half-aloud:

"Well, I am embarked now as one man in the world to make or mar my life."

"I am guiltless of wrong toward my brother, but never can I forgive what he has made me suffer."

"It may be that my mother's blood in my veins, made me less of a Sea Gipsy than Lindo, and the others, for I could have relinquished the right to rule without a pang, if he had allowed me to do so."

"But, convinced of his superiority over me, Lindo forced me to a test, and I would not be beaten then."

"And what a result?"

"Winner in all things, I was dealt treacherously with, set aside, left to drown, and then humiliated with the lash, a punishment the Sea Gipsies visit only upon the worst of their race."

"But that merciless punishment sundered the friendship between my brother and myself, severed the tie that bound me to my people, for such they are, or were, and sent me a wanderer out upon the world."

"I sought to hide my shame by death in the sea; but fate beckoned me on."

"I saved a vessel and many lives, and my reward was being put in irons."

"Man's inhumanity to me is great and sinful; but I am not one to readily forgive or forget, where a wrong has been intentionally done me."

"And in my misery I yet have found friends, and through their kindness and trust I am now at the helm of this vessel."

"Can I not rise above what I now am?"

"Must I creep where inferior men can walk erect?"

"No! Sea Gipsy though I am, I have ambition, and I will yet make those who have wronged me feel my power."

"I will yet show that I am not wholly a Bohemian of an outcast race of Sea Gipsies, but have other blood in me."

"By the Crescent Moon! but I had forgotten the package taken from my mother's grave."

"I have clung to it through all, and yet not dared to open it."

"I have it safe here, fast to my belt, and it may have been the safeguard that has sustained me through all."

"The moon is high, the sea is smooth, so I will leave the helm to other hands and, in the seclusion of my cabin, open the package, the legacy from my mother's grave."

Calling to one of the men to come to the helm, Kosta cast a glance around the moonlit sea, and observing no sail in sight went below into his cabin.

From the time that Carriza had thrown the silken cord about his neck which held the leather package it had not left Kosta, for he had kept it fast to his belt.

Several times he had been tempted to open it when a prisoner on board the Sentinel; but he shrunk from doing so with the remark:

"No, I will not open this legacy from my mother's grave, be it what it may, while my hands and feet are in irons and my back wounded with the blows my brother, her other son, has inflicted upon me."

But now, alone in his cabin, free, and where he was master, he took the package and placed it before him upon the table.

It was tightly closed, and the strings that were about it had to be cut to open it.

Within was an oilskin envelope, and it contained a letter addressed simply:

"TO MY SON."

He knew that it was his father's writing.

A small buckskin pouch was also in the leather case, and this was tied securely and sealed.

Opening the letter first, and he broke the seal to do so, he saw that it contained several closely-written pages, and it bore the words at its head:

"To my son, with the accompanying legacy from the grave of his mother."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OLD SEA KING'S CONFESSION.

IT was some little time before Kosta seemed to gain courage enough to read what was written by his father.

At last, with a sigh, he read the letter, and every word was weighed well in his heart and brain.

It was dated at the Gipsies' Island, several years before, and was as follows:

"MY SON:—

"I so address you, for the one who reads these lines will be my successor, be king of the Sea Gipsies, and to him I make known a secret of my life, and of his mother.

"To your brother, if so you wish, you may make the story I now tell known, but in telling you I feel that I do my duty, and give you the right to bury it in your own heart, or not, as you may desire.

"When you and your brother were born, I had no thought that, you being twins, there would be any trouble as to my successor in the future.

"And, as you grew in years, the one the image of your mother, the other said to be as strangely like myself, I began to feel that it would be hard to judge between you as to which should be the Sea Gipsies' king after I had gone to my deep-sea grave.

"I knew that our people loved manliness in a ruler, and one who could show his superiority as a right to command them, and so I gave to your brother and yourself every advantage.

"You had your own boats, you had your teachers, you learned the perfect use of the sword, dared to brave the sea in your vessels in the maddest storms, and to breast the waves in swimming where few others dared venture.

"I saw that you were both able commanders, thorough sailors, dead shots, marvelous runners, and all that men could be to adorn the position of ruler over our people.

"And so, unable to choose between you, and wishing to do neither injustice, while I had unbounded faith that the victor would ever be a noble brother to the vanquished, I decided upon a contest between you for the crown of the Sea Gipsies' king.

"That there should be perfect harmony I left it for one of you, desiring to withdraw without a contest, to do so, with full right to do as he pleased, and go where he pleased afterward, even to annulling his kinship with our people, and to have his share of the personal fortune I leave, while the one who takes my place as chief will far more than have compensation in what accompanies this letter, my last written words to you, my son, who read these lines.

"Having explained why it was I left the choice of a successor to him who won the right, I will now unfold a page of my past life which I deem it your right to know, and as it speaks of one, your mother, now in her grave, I leave this letter and what accompanies it in one of the shells that forms the tomb of her who gave you birth.

"You are aware that I did not wed one of the maidens of our race.

"You know that, in my earlier years, I was wont to cruise the seas at will, and, from one of these voyages I returned bringing your mother as my wife.

"When my father was the King of the Gipsies, our tribe was less powerful by far than now.

"He had been an officer of the Spanish Navy, and had turned his vessel into a pirate.

"One of his captures was an emigrant ship, bound from France to the Americas.

"There were upon it a hundred women and children, and half as many men.

"My father carried them to an island of the West Indies and there founded a small colony with them.

"Continuing his cruises he was wont to take his captives, be they English, American, Spanish, French or Mexicans to his island, and thus was founded the race of Sea Gipsies.

"Hunted by cruisers, and expecting his island to be attacked, he moved his colony from island to island, and again upon the mainland, until, giving up piracy, he became their king, and at twenty-five years of age married one of the fair maidens of the tribe and settled down among his people.

"His first wife died, and loving her as he did, it was long before he married again, and the one who then wedded him was my mother, the second Queen of the Gipsies.

"The laws that govern our people to-day were made by my father, and all who were then in the tribe ratified them, and they have been our guide in all things.

"True as steel have been our people to them, and true as steel may they ever be.

"We have become wanderers about the earth, and living by the ocean, we well deserve the name of Sea Gipsies, and as such may we ever be known.

"I became king of our people, by the death of my father, when I was but twenty-two years of age, and in a letter left me by him, I learned the secret of from whence we had sprung.

"As Americans, we look upon the American nation as our friends; but we owe no allegiance to other lands, and regard other people as our foes.

"I have tried to govern my people well and wisely, and I trust that you, my son, will do the same, and so I leave the power in your hands, a power over a people that no ruler in Europe holds over a nation, so be ever generous and just, I pray of you.

"Now, having made known to you that which, as the King of the Sea Gipsies, you should know, let me make to you a confession of who your mother was, and how she became my wife.

"If I did wrong I can only prove my idolatrous love for her in palliation, and I know she made me a better man and did much to help me to elevate our people, so that I have hopes that some day we will be a nation of ourselves.

"But it rests with you, my son, to mar or make the Sea Gipsies, for a bad ruler may wipe us utterly off of the face of land and sea, as a people, while a noble king will cause us to advance as a race and make our power felt as an infant nation.

"So be warned to choose good, rather than evil, as it has been my endeavor always to teach you to do.

"But to the confession that I have to make and of your mother.

"It was in a Southern city that I first met her.

"I was in a wine-shop one night, when a quarrel occurred between three young men.

"I saw that one was the victim of the other two, and that for some purpose he was to be forced into an encounter.

"I was wont, in those days, to enjoy my visits to various ports at which I traded in my Sea Gipsy craft, and, well dressed and educated, I found no difficulty in going where every gentleman could gain admittance.

"The wine-shop where we were was a fashionable one, frequented by the young men of riches in the town.

"But for all that I saw that the two referred to were forcing a quarrel upon the other, who was their junior in years, a mere boy, in fact, but plucky.

"Instantly I took his part, stepping to his side and saying:

"Permit me to be your friend, monsieur, as I like fair play."

"He thanked me and referred the two men to me as a second, as after what had passed a duel must follow.

"Arrangements were quickly made, and we drove at once to the dueling-ground outside of the city's limits.

"Swords were to be used, and the result was that my young acquaintance was run through the body.

"I carried him home in a dying condition, and his sister received us at the door of the elegant mansion where they lived.

"He told her what had happened, and I learned that he knew them as fast, bad men, had refused to allow them to call upon his sister, and they had sought revenge upon him.

"He died in my arms, and from that day his sister knew me as a friend.

"I sought out those two men and accused them of murder.

"A duel followed, and I ran one through the heart.

"I did not allow the other to escape me, for his time soon came, as at a meeting with pistols I sent a bullet into his brain.

"The young brother was avenged, and the sister knew that it was for her sake I had acted.

"I had plenty of money, lived luxuriously, yet no one knew who or what I was.

"I loved her with all my soul, and she returned that love, asking no questions of me.

"So it was that one night she fled from her home with me and became my wife."

"I told her, when we were at sea, bound for our Gipsies' Island, who and what I was.

"It nearly broke her heart, and yet she did not upbraid or desert me, until death took her from me when you and your brother were born.

"She brought with her when she fled with me a fortune in gems, and I matched them with precious stones of equal value and placed all in her hands.

"They are in the little buckskin bag that accompanies this confession, and are your own—your legacy from your mother.

"Along with them you will find a miniature likeness of her, as she was when she became my wife, and upon the gold case is engraven her name.

"Now, my son, let me bid you farewell, and say long live the Sea Gipsies and their king.

"Your father,
"ZOTA."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LEGACY AND A VOW.

FOR a long time after reading the letter, a communication from the dead, Kosta the Sea Gipsy sat in silent meditation, his head resting upon his hands, the lines written by his father lying open before him.

At last, with a sigh, he turned to the other package that had been in the leather case.

It was a buckskin bag, and its contents he knew would reveal to him the face of his mother.

A Gipsy artist had painted her, as she stood by the side of her husband, but the work was crude, and little like her.

Still Kosta had gazed upon it with respect and interest at all times from his boyhood.

He now turned with reverential awe to the case before him.

The seal was broken, which fastened the little buckskin bag, and he took out first a morocco case.

It opened with a spring and within lay a miniature likeness, set in solid gold, gemmed with pearls and diamonds.

The face was one that fairly fascinated him.

It was the face of a young girl of eighteen, and as lovely as an artist's dream of perfect womanhood.

The hair was golden, the eyes large, dreamy, and blue as indigo, while the expression upon the face was one of purity and refinement.

Clasping the miniature in his hand Kosta gazed and gazed, feasting his eyes upon the exquisite beauty of the face of his mother in her youthful freshness, at the time that she became his father's wife.

"I do not wonder that father madly loved her," he resumed aloud.

"I do not wonder that he even deceived her to win her, leading her to believe that he was other than he was.

"And yet, when she discovered who he was she never deserted him, though I fear it broke her heart.

"Ah, me! could I but meet with such a face.

"I thought that I loved Carriza.

"But no, no, not if there are such women in the world as was my mother.

"A face like this fascinates me, and I would win such a woman, or die."

So he mused for a long time and at last turned the miniature over and read, engraven on the gold case:

"VICTOIRE ENDERS

"TO

"CLAUDE BENZOTA,

"May 1st, 18—."

"Yes, this was her name—Victoire Enders, and father's was originally Benjamin Claude Zota, and he changed it to Claude Benzota, and as such my mother married him.

"It is our Gipsy custom to have but one name, but I must now take another, and I will use my father's and my mother's combined—my name shall be Victor Benzota.

"Now to see my legacy, left by my father and my mother, for in the sight of justice all these are mine, as I won in the contest with my brother, I swam to the island and secured this leathern case with its treasures so dear to me, and Lindo's treachery alone made him the Sea Gipsies' king.

So saying he opened the other little packet inclosed in the leather case with the miniature, and he fairly started at what he beheld.

There was first a necklace of diamonds, large, pure and vastly valuable, a small fortune in itself.

Then a ruby wristband of great value, a brooch of emeralds, and several rings, one of the latter a plain gold band in which was inscribed:

"CLAUDE AND VICTOIRE,

"June 5th, 18—."

"My mother's wedding-ring," he murmured, and he placed it upon the small finger of his left hand.

Then came a small miniature likeness of his father, set in gold and encircled by rubies.

It was a likeness taken of his father before his marriage to his mother, and he said aloud:

"The perfect image of Lindo to-day.

"Would that my brother had possessed my father's noble soul along with his likeness."

A small silk pouch was then opened, and this revealed a hundred precious stones, diamonds, pearls, rubies and emeralds, each one of them vastly valuable.

"These were my mother's, and they are indeed a fortune and a vast one."

And he took up another silk pouch bearing his father's seal.

This opened disclosed full two hundred gems, diamonds and rubies, and of fully double the value of the others.

"I am a millionaire," cried the Sea Gipsy, aloud, staring at the treasure before him.

"Without a dollar in the world I have been carrying swung to my belt a fortune such as few can boast of.

"Now I see a different career before me than becoming a toiler of the sea for my daily bread.

"No, no, no! I will not grovel when I can climb, and the world shall feel my power, the Sea Gipsies my revenge.

"I am one of them, yes, by birth, but my mother was not, and my father is dead.

"They are but a race of pirates.

"They hated me because I looked like my mother, was not dark-faced like my brother.

"They knew that I won the king's scepter, and yet they aided my brother by their silence to rescue it through treachery."

"Is not my back scarred and sore now through the blows given me at my brother's command?"

"Did they not stand by and see me tortured, and, had they dared follow me in that mad sea, would they not have dragged me back and put me to death?"

"Zampa, Carriza, Yampal and a few others I do not hate; but woe be unto Lindo, the treacherous Sea Gipsy King and his vile brood, for I have the power here, here in my hand, to strike them now, and I shall hit hard to avenge all that I have suffered."

"I am not a Sea Gipsy not to be revengeful, and I will wipe the Wanderers of the Waves off from the face of the earth and ocean."

"Not a resting-place shall they find—I vow it! ay, vow it before the just God above whom the Sea Gipsies do not worship!"

As he spoke he held his right hand upward, while his eyes were raised, his lips moved as if in a silent prayer for Heaven to hear his vow of revenge against the Gipsy Corsairs.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SAILOR OVERMATCHED.

CAPTAIN DANFORTH, of the brig-of-war Sentinel, felt a severe pang of guilty conscience when he saw Kosta, the Sea Gipsy leap into the waters before he would again submit to his tyranny.

He really felt kindly toward the man who had saved his vessel and the lives of his crew; but he was determined to make the Sea Gipsy feel his power, and cancel the debt of gratitude by giving to him a pardon for the crimes he believed him to be guilty of.

Once Kosta had said he was a deserter from the United States Navy, and had been severely whipped for some crime, the captain would have been satisfied, treated him with marked kindness, gotten him full pardon and made him boatswain of the brig.

Such was his nature. But, as Kosta preferred to remain silent about himself and his misfortunes, then Captain Danforth meant to force him into a confession.

But he found that the Sea Gipsy was made of a different material from what he had expected, and when he plunged into the waters, his manacles, on his wrists, Leo Danforth was fairly stunned by the shock.

The prompt action, however, of Lieutenant Reddington brought the brig to, and the boats were lowered, though uselessly, as the reader is aware.

Believing that the man had gone to the bottom, Captain Danforth was considerably upset and retired to his cabin, leaving Lieutenant Reddington in charge to run the brig to an anchorage near the docks, where she could be taken in the morning.

He knew it would not sound well that he had put a man in irons who had saved his ship simply because he suspected him of being a criminal and he would not tell who he was, and his conduct had driven the brave fellow into springing overboard and taking his own life.

Leo Danforth was ambitious.

He came of a good family, and their influence had pushed him rapidly up the scale of promotion.

He was a fine officer, it is true, a thorough seaman, and had done excellent service in the brig, showing that he was worthy at least of his rapid advancement.

But then the loss of the pilot would tell against him, he well knew.

It was therefore a great relief to him the next morning to learn from a fisherman that he had seen the brig on her way up suddenly come to and lower her boats, and after she had gone on her way once more up the harbor, a man swim ashore and go down toward the cabin of Fenton the fisherman.

Ferd Lucas, with four men in a boat were at once sent after the fugitive, with orders to bring him back, dead or alive, for knowing the man not to have died, Leo Danforth's courage arose once more.

He was away when the midshipman returned, and Lieutenant Reddington had hauled the brig into the dock for repairs.

It was night when the captain returned, and he at once asked if the fugitive had been captured.

"No, sir."

"And did not Lucas go after him, Reddington?"

"He did, sir."

"Did he visit the cabin of the fisherman?"

"Yes, sir, but the man was not there."

"Did he search the place?"

"I'll send for him, Captain Danforth, for you to learn all particulars from him," coldly said Reddington, and in a few moments Ferd Lucas put in an appearance.

"Well, sir, what report have you to make about the fugitive pilot?"

"I went to the cabin, sir, and they told me he was not there."

"Who are they?"

"The old skipper and his pretty daughter."

"Had he been there?"

"I did not ask them, sir."

"Did you not search the cabin?"

"I did not, Captain Danforth."

"And why not?"

"I did not consider that I had a right to do so, sir."

"An officer in the discharge of his duty has a right to go anywhere, sir."

"Order a boat alongside, sir, and half a dozen marines in it, with four oarsmen."

"Going well fortified with force, but just wait until he sees Ruby Fenton's pretty eyes and he'll strike his flag," said the gay middy to Lieutenant Reddington, as the captain rowed away.

"She is so pretty then, Ferd?"

"My stars! if I was only older!"

"I'll take you there, lieutenant, for we'll have to go and apologize for the captain's rudeness."

Reddington laughed and promised to go.

In the mean time the father and daughter had just returned to the house, after seeing the sloop depart.

They were seated in their cosy room, little dreaming of visitors, when they were startled by voices outside and a knock.

"Well, who comes?" asked Skipper Fenton.

"Open in the name of the law!" cried Leo Danforth, sternly.

"In the name of law, humanity or welcome I am ready ever to open my door," answered the skipper as he threw it open.

Danforth was in ill-humor, and he meant to be severe.

But the gray-haired old man, the beautiful girl and the cheerful room, on all of which there was a stamp of refinement, presented a vision he had little expected to behold.

He had expected to find a small log cabin, in the first place, and was surprised to see a substantial house.

Then, when the interior was disclosed, with the dignified old skipper and his beautiful daughter, the naval officer was quite taken aback.

Seeing that a captain of the navy in full uniform stood before him, Skipper Fenton bowed low and said:

"Will you enter, sir?"

"I beg pardon, sir, but I am in search of a man who deserted from my vessel, and was seen to come here at an early hour this morning."

"He is not here, sir," said the skipper firmly, and he added:

"An officer was here this morning in search of him."

"Have you seen such a person as I describe?"

The skipper was silent, and Ruby said quickly:

"No, sir, we have seen no deserter from your ship."

"This man was in irons, lady," and Danforth bowed.

"I know the one to whom you refer, sir, but he was no deserter, never having shipped on your vessel."

This was a severe shot, and Leo Danforth colored, but he said:

"We will not discuss who he was; but tell me if you have seen such a man as I describe, please."

"Yes, an unfortunate person in irons, wet and suffering, came to our house last night, having just sprung overboard from a brig-of-war whose captain's tyranny, from some petty cause, was forcing him to undergo a punishment as for crime, after he had saved that officer's life, his vessel and the lives of his crew."

"The man made no confession of his wrongs to us, but he had once saved my father from death, and we gave him shelter, cut the manacles from his wrists and he has gone his way."

Leo Danforth felt in a very awkward position, for his men heard all that Ruby Fenton said.

Had it been her father he could have silenced him; but the young girl made him listen in spite of himself.

So he blurted forth:

"You confess to having given him refuge, then?"

"Certainly, and why not?"

"But he has gone?"

"Yes, and far beyond the reach of your cruel tyranny, sir."

Leo Danforth winced at this, and asked:

"Where has he gone?"

"If I knew, I would not tell you."

"Did he go on foot?"

"Yes, he walked away from this door."

"Tell me who the man is, please?"

"I do not know."

"And you, sir?"

He turned sharply to Skipper Fenton as he spoke.

"I met him, sir, about a year ago, when he saved my life; but I know nothing whatever regarding him, except the rumor that has gone about that he saved your vessel, and this he did not himself speak of."

"And the rumor that is also afloat, sir, of your severity toward him," added Ruby.

Danforth felt that he was overmatched, and believing that the Sea Gipsy had remained but a short while at the cabin, he decided to depart, so he said coldly:

"I thank you."

Then he raised his hat, and turned away, followed by his men.

"Did you find him, sir?" asked Ferd Lucas, who was a privileged character in his way.

"No!"

"The captain's mad, so I guess he was not treated well," laughed the middy, as he turned to Lieutenant Reddington, who responded:

"Something went wrong with him, that's certain."

"Go forward and pump the men, Ferd."

Ferd Lucas did so, and returned in great glee to laugh over what he had heard from the coxswain of the boat, and also to congratulate himself that neither the old skipper nor Ruby had divulged how they heard the story of Danforth's treatment of the Sea Gipsy.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE HAUNTED SEA GIPSY.

In a securely sheltered cove of one of the Bahama Islands lay a vessel, which having been once seen could not be readily mistaken, for it is the Wind-Chaser, the flagship of the Gipsy Corsair's fleet.

The pretty vessel is alone, and her appearance indicates that she has been undergoing repairs.

There are neat patches upon her sails, where cannon-balls have torn their way through, and the bulwarks, decks and spars have been neatly mended, where unseemly scars had disfigured them.

But the pretty craft was not really hurt, and seemed to ride at her anchor impatiently, as though anxious to again dare the dangers of the past three months in her career as a pirate.

Her crew were upon deck, but seemed to have been thinned out by fully one-half, by death and wounds; but they were by no means in a gloomy mood, and laughed and chatted merrily.

It was a wild, barren island where the Wind-Chaser lay, and as her topmasts were housed, as though to prevent their being seen above the cliffs by a passing vessel, it was very evident that she was in hiding.

Upon the top of one of the cliffs a man stood on watch, and a rope made fast above hung down to the sandy shore, as a quick way to ascend and descend in case of need, without having to walk around quite a distance.

Suddenly the man leveled a glass far out upon the sea, and instantly came his cry:

"Sail, ho!"

The words were repeated by an officer on deck down the companionway, and the next moment Lindo, the Sea Gipsies' King, appeared.

He wore his left arm in a sling, and it may have been the pain he had suffered from his wound that had marked his face with suffering; but certainly a change had come over him.

His eyes were sunken, his lips stern-set, and his face was flushed and bloated.

"Whereaway?" he called out in a tone that was fretful.

"Directly ahead of me, sir, as I now stand," responded the lookout on the cliff, who was plainly visible from the deck.

"Can you make her out?"

"Not yet, sir, but I think she is a schooner."

"Report as soon as you can."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And back to his cabin returned the Sea Gipsy King.

In half an hour he returned on deck, called thither by a report from the man on the cliff.

"Well, sir?"

"It is a schooner, sir, and I think it is the Sea Cloud, sir."

"I hope so."

"Now I will know what goes on at the Island, and if I am still to be a haunted man through life," muttered Lindo.

For three months he had been at sea, and fortune had favored him.

He had captured several large and richly-freighted vessels flying the Spanish and British flags, and beaten off with his three schooners a large French brig-of-war that had sought to capture them as pirates.

In this battle he had lost heavily, and been wounded himself in the arm, though not seriously.

Appointing a rendezvous, at the island among the Bahamas, where the Wind-Chaser is discovered at anchor, he sent his other two vessels to the Gipsies' Island with their prizes, and to repair these and return with more men to make their crews and his own complete.

And so he was anxious to know how his victories would be received, as also the severe loss of his crews, while he hoped the golden bait that he held out in the way of prizes, for the common riches of all, would more than compensate for the loss of life.

But he was more anxious to know if the island was still haunted by the ghost of Carriza.

As for himself, he had at least been free from seeing it, and when he sought rest at night, he was certain to drown his senses with the drug, arranging the potion to last the number of hours he wished to sleep.

In this way he had managed to keep off the specter from his slumbers, but the drug was telling upon him, as his face revealed, and he had taken to strong drink to drive off the effects by day.

Thus was Lindo, the Sea Gipsies' King, a wretched, a haunted man.

At length the lookout on the cliff reported that the vessel in sight was indeed the Sea Cloud, and signaling her, the signal was returned.

"Where is the Sea Gipsy, I wonder?" said Lindo anxiously, as he paced the deck.

At length the Sea Cloud ran into the harbor, dropped anchor and a boat put off from her side with her captain, a tall, dark-faced man with heavy beard and long black curling hair.

The deck of the Sea Gipsy was crowded with men, and she presented the appearance of being a new vessel, so thoroughly had she been overhauled and refitted.

"Well, Vidal, I am glad to see you."

"Come into the cabin," and Lindo strove hard to conceal his nervousness.

Vidal, the Sea Cloud's captain entered the cabin and took a seat, while Lindo turned upon him with a smile:

"Well?"

"We ran home with the prizes, sir, and our people were wild with excitement over our victories and captures."

"And our losses?"

"Were taken as the natural following of battle, though of course there were many sad hearts."

"You brought more men?"

"Oh, yes, we refitted our ships fully, filled up our crews and brought you all you need."

"But where is the Sea Gipsy?"

"Marco went off last night in chase of a merchant brig that looked valuable, and I came straight on to report to you, sir."

"I am glad that you did so; but what news is there among our people?" and the Sea Gipsy king tried to appear indifferent.

"All goes on well, sir, and the Council of Twelve have had no trouble."

"And Zampa?"

"Is the same quiet, silent man, sir, devoting himself to his duties, while he has been drilling men at the guns in the fort, so as to have them understand their duties in case of need."

"That is right, Vidal, but what of—of—Yampal?"

"He is studying now, sir, under Zampa, intending to become a chemist and doctor."

"That is well, too, for one is not enough for our people, since we took Zampa's three other students on our vessels as surgeons."

"And have found need for them," said Vidal, quietly.

"And will find more; but has the—thespecter been seen since our departure?"

Vidal's face changed at once, and Lindo saw it.

"Yes, Lindo, Carriza still haunts the island, and is often seen."

The sweat broke out upon the face of Lindo and he was silent, while Vidal continued:

"King Lindo, Carriza's ghost has even been seen in the harbor at night."

Lindo trembled, but forced himself to remain calm by keeping silent.

"And that is not all."

Lindo could not speak, but mutely gazed at Vidal.

Then Vidal continued:

"Your brother's spirit has been seen."

The Sea Gipsy King was like a statue, and he could utter no word.

But his calmness caused Vidal to believe him unmoved and listening, so he continued:

"He was seen at the last welcome to the new moon."

"Our people went forth to bid Luna welcome, when in a white skiff came the spirit of Prince Kosta."

"He glided by, looking with his white face straight at our people, who did not fly, but rested on their oars in horror and silence."

"He circled around the boats thrice and then came a call across the waters."

"It was the voice of Carriza, and soon she appeared in the moonlight in her skiff, and she was beckoning to Prince Kosta."

"Then he shook his hand warningly toward our people, and went toward where Carriza was, still calling to him, and both disappeared far out upon the sea."

"I tell you, King Lindo, our people are deeply moved over all this."

"And Zampa?" at last almost burst from the lips of Lindo.

"What says Zampa of it?"

"Zampa is a fearless man, Lindo."

"He holds no fear of men or demons, and he went alone in chase of the spirit of your brother one night."

"The phantom led him to the Grave Isle, and Zampa boldly landed."

"It was dawn when he returned, and then he had a strange story to tell, for he said that the grave of your mother yawned wide open, the body was gone, and not a vestige of the monument of shells remained—but—"

With a cry of alarm Vidal sprung to catch King Lindo, as he fell heavily to the floor in a swoon.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MIDNIGHT CHASE.

THE Ocean Ruby went merrily along upon her course, and leaving the Chandeleur Islands far away upon her starboard quarter, headed for the Delta of the Mississippi.

It was long after midnight before her young skipper turned in, for his brain was on fire with all he had read of the past of his race, and the fortune which had suddenly come into his grasp.

His men found him in a pleasant mood the next day, and the more they saw of him the more they liked him.

The wind was not very strong on the run, so that the Ocean Ruby did not make a rapid voyage, and a calm caught her as she was ascending the river and had arrived a few miles below the city.

The anchor was let fall close inshore, under the shadows of the large cypress trees, festooned with Spanish moss, and allowing his men all to turn in for the night, Kosta paced the deck.

Suddenly he heard the splash of oars.

The night was very dark, and being in shadow the sloop was not visible to those in a small boat, until they ran almost upon her.

An oath, a stern command, and the boat sheered off.

But suddenly a loud cry for help broke the stillness of the night.

It was a woman's voice, and the pleading words rung out:

"Help! save me, oh, save me, for I am the captive of pirates!"

This was enough for Kosta, the Sea Gipsy.

His boat was towing at the stern, for in the afternoon he had lowered it from the davits to go ashore and bring off a deer which he had shot from the sloop's deck with the old skipper's rifle.

He called to his men to come on deck, and dashing into his cabin seized a belt of pistols belonging also to the old skipper.

Without waiting the coming of his men he sprung into his boat as he unfastened the painter and in a moment was in chase.

He had caught sight of two oarsmen and two other forms in the boat as it passed; but he was not one to reckon numbers against him, and so pulled off alone.

As an oarsman Kosta had never met his superior, and though at first his sore back and stiff muscles caused him to row slowly, he soon warmed to his work.

It was not long before a glance at the boat showed that he was gaining.

He knew well his powers, and he fairly lifted his skiff out of the water at every stroke.

Another glance showed him that he was not twenty lengths astern.

He could hear the low, stern command to the two oarsmen to pull for their lives, and yet he steadily gained.

That no other cry for help came from the boat convinced him that the one who had appealed to him had been secured beyond calling again, or perhaps slain.

Soon came the stern command:

"Ho, that boat! put back, or I fire!"

"Fire away!"

The reckless response was followed by a flash and report, and a bullet flew by Kosta's head.

He half stopped rowing and dropped a hand upon his pistol, but checked himself quickly and resumed his oars, as he said:

"I may hit the wrong one."

"I'll get near enough to see whom I shoot."

Again he rowed on, and as he gained once more another shot came.

But the bullet flew wild.

A third shot flashed forth, but, unheeding it, with utter recklessness Kosta rowed on.

A glance, as a fourth shot struck his oar and sent the splinters flying, caused him to see that he was not a length away.

The flash also revealed the fact that there were two oarsmen in the boat, a muffled form lying in the stern, and a man standing in a crouching attitude and firing upon him.

Quick as a flash Kosta had his weapon leveled and drew trigger.

A cry from the man as he fell back told him he was hard hit, and the boat almost stopped.

"Row on, you devils! What if he has hit me?" cried the wounded man.

But the temporary stopping of the oarsmen allowed Kosta time to resume his oars and send his boat alongside.

"Kill him, you cowards!" yelled the wounded man, who was on his back in the bottom of the boat.

One fired, but so did Kosta, and the man dropped dead.

At the same moment he dealt the wounded man a blow with his discharged pistol, and seizing in his arms the form of a woman who half-rose from her place in the stern-sheets, he at once sprung back on his own boat.

"Lie down, lady, for they may fire," he said, quickly, and having emptied his pistols by his two shots, he grasped his oars and pulled away, just as another shot came.

But the bullet struck the gunwale, doing no damage, and Kosta sent his skiff flying away back up the river, while the other boat drifted on down the stream.

Once out of the way of pistol-shots, Kosta ceased rowing and bent over the woman he had so daringly rescued.

He knew that she was not in a swoon, but then she had uttered no word.

He quickly discovered that her hands were ironed behind her back, and that a gag had been thrust into her mouth.

Instantly he released her from the gag, but the irons he could not free her of.

"I will pull to my sloop, lady, and file them off for you," he said in a low, kindly voice, and he bent to his oars, after placing her in a comfortable position.

"You have saved me, sir, from more than you can dream of, and my heart's eternal gratitude is yours."

"I hope you were not harmed, sir."

Her voice was musical and touched the heart of the Sea Gipsy, who at once replied:

"No, indeed, lady, I was not hurt; but you have suffered, and still do, for it is a fearful thing to be in irons," and the Sea Gipsy shuddered.

"He placed them upon me, and put the gag in my mouth, after I cried for help."

"We ran almost upon your vessel in the darkness, and seeing you, I suppose it was, sir, standing on her deck, I cried to you to save me."

"And nobly did you respond to my appeal, and your daring to face those men alone shows a courage few possess."

"I could not refuse to answer your appeal to me, lady, and I am happy to have served you."

"You said they were pirates?"

"Yes, the one you wounded, and I hope, killed, even though it is wicked for me to say so, was once my friend."

"But he turned out bad, committed crime and turned pirate."

"His vessel is below, he told me, and he came up to my home to-night, kidnapped me and bore me off."

"He had two motives, one being to force me to marry him, the other to get my fortune."

"So you can see what you have saved me from—yes, from worse than death."

"I am glad to have done so, and I feel that fate has not deserted me, as I had feared it had a short few days ago."

"But, as it will take hours to file off these irons, and the city is but a league away, perhaps I had better row you straight on to your home, rather than to my vessel, for your friends will be most anxious about you."

"You are as kind and considerate, sir, as you are brave and noble."

"May I ask your name, sir?"

Kosta hailed his sloop as he went by, that he would soon return, and then answered:

"I am but a poor sailor, lady, on a coast trading-craft, and I have been known as Prince."

"I thank you again, Monsieur Prince, but, even in this darkness you seem little to me like a poor sailor, but rather the courtly gentleman."

"It is the darkness that causes me to appear what I am not, lady," was the answer, and Kosta bent hard to his oars, while he evaded every effort of the maiden to draw him out about himself.

The lights of the city soon came in sight, and up above the town the maiden pointed to a large mansion, embowered in foliage, which she said was her home.

He rowed her to the landing and aided her to the shore, and both saw that there was great excitement in the mansion, which was lighted up brilliantly, while servants ran to and fro.

"They are searching for me, and my coming will gladden my dear old father's heart, and a warm welcome will he give you, sir."

"Pardon, lady, but as you are at home now I will leave you."

"What! will you not come with me to my home and see my father?"

"It is impossible now, lady."

"Then at another time you will call, for I am determined to know you better?"

"Yes, lady, at another time," was the low reply.

"I cannot offer my hand, as you see; but, good-by, though I feel hurt you will not come with me now, for, as it is, I would not know you were I to see you again."

"Good-by, lady."

And Kosta, the Sea Gipsy, doffed his hat with courtly grace, and springing into his boat rowed swiftly away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LEO DANFORTH'S PLOT.

THE young captain of the brig-of-war Sentinel was a man who hated, above all things, to be worsted in anything that he undertook.

He was in no good temper at the escape of the Sea Gipsy from his clutches, and the fact that Skipper Fenton and his daughter had given him refuge, and then told him of it, did not add to his kindly humor.

He was the more anxious to catch the mysterious pilot that he might set at rest the idle rumors about his ill-treatment of him, by giving him a pardon for any crimes he might have committed, force a reward upon him, and at the same time give him a good berth on board his ship, for he wished to have just such a man, one who knew those waters perfectly, and at the same time was trustworthy and utterly fearless.

Determined not to be outdone, Captain Danforth went ashore and sought advice.

The result was that several men were engaged to hunt down the fugitive pilot.

After several days of waiting, one of the men came to the brig and asked to see the captain.

He looked like a seaman, and was a young man with a dissipated look, but not unhand-some face.

He was announced as Henry Vint, and the captain ordered that he should be shown into his cabin.

"Ah, my man, you have news, I judge," said Captain Danforth, recognizing one of the men that he had put upon the track of the mysterious fugitive.

"Yes, sir, I know it all," was the confident reply.

"Know all what?"

"All about your man."

"Ah! Where is he?"

"At sea, about now, sir."

"I feared as much."

"But he's coming back, sir."

"When?"

"Within a couple of weeks, sir."

"How do you know?"

"He sailed on the sloop of old Skipper Fenton."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure?"

"Well, sir, I know the Fentons, and I don't like the old man, though I'm sweet on his pretty daughter."

"I know the men who are the crew of the sloop, which old Fenton called the Ocean Ruby, after his daughter, and the brother of one of them told me the skipper did not intend to take the craft over on her run to New Orleans, but he would put another master on board."

"So I went down to the fishing cots on the bay, and I learned that the Ocean Ruby lay to off Skipper Fenton's home for some little time."

"I asked if a boat went out to her from the shore, and was told yes."

"Then I hunted around and found out from a fisherman's wife who saw the sloop, for it was bright moonlight, that three persons had gone off in the boat and but two had returned."

"I find that the old man and his daughter are at home, so your man was the third person, and he is evidently the new skipper of the sloop, a berth I ought to have, for I sailed on the craft once."

"And you think there is no doubt as to the new master of the sloop being my man?"

"I know there is none, sir."

"You only think so?"

"No, sir, I know it."

"And how?"

"Well, sir, I crept up to the cabin of the skipper, and listened by crawling under the house, where I could hear all that was said."

"The skipper has a bad dog, but the brute knows me, and so did not harm me."

"And what heard you?"

"They—"

"The skipper and his daughter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"They talked over how they had thrown dust in your eyes."

Danforth frowned and bit his lip.

"They also congratulated themselves upon having gotten the fugitive to command the sloop, and said that, before the return of the Ocean Ruby, your brig would have finished her repairs and have gone to sea."

"Aha!"

"Yes, sir; but if you had not they would watch for the sloop and go off and bring the master ashore."

"My man, you have done well, so here is your reward."

"Thank you, sir; you are generous," and the man, Henry Vint, pocketed the gold handed to him.

"Now go and call off the two others who were to aid you in the search, and send them to me for their pay."

"You need not tell them that you made any discoveries."

"No, sir."

"And now let me ask you if you have not

just a little motive of revenge against the skipper and his daughter?"

"Well, sir, I loved the girl, and she refused me."

"I see; but that is your business, not mine."

"Good-night, Henry Vint."

"Good-night, sir, and I thank you."

"If you want a berth at any time, come to me."

"Thank you, sir."

The man departed, while Danforth muttered:

"Now I will triumph, after all."

"I will hasten my repairs, put to sea and lie in the lower bay to catch the sloop on her return."

"I shall take my man off, give him his pardon, and end this talk which I know is being indulged in by officers' crew, and the citizens."

A week after the brig was ready for sea, greatly to the regret of Lieutenant Ross Reddington, who had gone with Midshipman Ferd Lucas to the home of the old skipper, "to apologize for the captain," as the middy put it, but in reality to see the pretty Ruby.

They were successful, and Ross Reddington fairly admitted he had lost his heart as the two went back to the ship.

"You are too young to be my rival, Ferd, so I don't mind telling you I am over head and ears with the girl, for she is a lady, and very, very beautiful."

"They have had a come-down in life, Ferd, for that is not the home of ordinary people, humble though it is."

"Yes sir; I've heard the old skipper comes of good stock and was once a rich ship-owner; but you have got it bad, lieutenant."

The lieutenant laughed and replied:

"Any affection that you might feel, Ferd, is only chicken love."

"Yes; but chicken love sometimes hurts, lieutenant; but I yield her to you without a murmur or a pang, for she will be a grandmother before I think of marrying."

"But, lieutenant?"

"Yes?"

"I thought that you were in love with the beautiful Miss Toinette Vallour, of New Orleans?"

"Ah, Ferd, go lightly, boy, for I was, and am; but she does not love me, and was frank enough to tell me she would be a sister to me, but not a wife."

"But this fair Ruby of the Sea will soon drive the old love out for a new one," and the young lieutenant's sigh was echoed by Midshipman Ferd Lucas, whose nature it was to love to desperation every pretty girl; but as pretty girls were often met with, his love for each one was of short duration.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SAILOR LOVER.

It was with sincere regret that Lieutenant Ross Reddington heard the orders of his captain, to get the brig ready to go to sea within a couple of days, after leaving the dock.

He had managed to make a daily call at the "Cabin Home," as Ruby had named their little abode by the waters of the bay, and always with a good excuse for calling.

One day he was out hunting, and passing near stopped to ask her acceptance of some game.

The next day he was sailing, and becoming thirsty ran ashore for a drink of water.

Then he called to see how she was, and again to say good-by, as he feared they would go to sea soon.

When the order did come to go to sea, far sooner than he had anticipated, he hastened down to Cabin Home to tell the, to him, sad news.

Handsome, courtly and fascinating, Ross Reddington could not but impress Ruby and her father most favorably.

The skipper had heard of him as a dashing officer, and one who had wealth, while he knew that the young sailor had been unfortunate in having several duels forced upon him, but out of which he had come with honor to himself.

He saw that Ruby was becoming interested in the lieutenant, and yet he had perfect trust in her.

He had half-feared that she would fall in love with the splendid-looking man they had befriended, for Kosta was a mystery to him, and he dreaded his daughter loving one of whom he knew nothing.

Had it not been that Ross Reddington crossed her path, Ruby might have loved Kosta, for she was deeply interested in the strange man, though she stood in awe of him.

But the dashing lieutenant, with his soft voice and fascinating manners, and his decided liking for her, drove from her heart all thought of Kosta as a lover.

When therefore he called to bid her farewell, Ruby could not but show her regret.

He told her that he hoped soon to see her again, and bidding her good-by asked the skipper to kindly accompany him to his boat.

On the way thither he said in his frank, easy way:

"Skipper Fenton, I wish to tell you right out that I love your daughter, and I hope to win her love some day, with your consent."

"I am a senior lieutenant in the navy, and remain in the service from love of the sea alone, for I have an ample fortune to live on ashore."

"My family you must know something of, and I am aware that you are not what your poverty causes you to appear, though I have asked no questions about you, nor do I care to know more than that you are a gentleman and your daughter is a lady."

"She has told me that you have had her at boarding-school for years, and she is an honor to you in your old age, and should she marry me I would never part you from her."

"I have been wild, perhaps, and my life has had its shadows, as you may know, for ill-deeds are revealed by lightning-flashes where good ones are obscured by clouds."

"But I tell you again I love your daughter, and I ask your consent to win her as my wife if I can, and her heart is not elsewhere engaged."

"It may break the heart of our young middy friend, Lucas, but he can stand it, when I could not, to lose her," and Reddington laughed as he recalled the fact that Ferd Lucas had that day told him he had found another sweetheart.

"Lieutenant Reddington, I have admired you, sir, from the first, and I frankly give you the consent you ask, feeling honored that you, in your position, are willing to marry one who seems but the child of a poor fisherman."

"From my heart I thank you, Skipper Fenton, and I leave my case in your hands," and with a grasp of the hand in farewell, Reddington sprang into his boat and rowed rapidly back to the brig.

That night the brig set sail, for her captain did not wish her going out observed.

But both the father and daughter saw her as she swept down the bay, and both hoped that she would not run across the Ocean Ruby on her way, they little knowing that it was to catch the sloop that had caused her to put to sea.

Off the entrance of the bay the Sentinel cruised for several days, and at last one afternoon the sloop was sighted.

Other vessels had passed in and out, but not one had proven to be a sloop.

There was a new pilot on board the Sentinel, and his name was Henry Vint, and he knew the Ocean Ruby well, so Captain Danforth had no fear of making a mistake.

The truth was, that when spending her vacations with her father, Ruby had met Henry Vint.

He was a wild fellow, and yet she liked him, while he fell desperately in love with her.

After the skipper's circumstances were somewhat bettered by his finding the deserted vessel, he made Vint mate of the sloop; but the young man was dissipated, and seeing that he was in love with Ruby, Mr. Fenton discharged him.

He took his discharge very savagely and appealed to Ruby to show her love for him.

But she added her dismissal to her father's, and this will show the animus with which he hunted down the mysterious pilot, Kosta, fearing that he was a successful rival for the love of Ruby Fenton.

Before the brig sailed he came on board and offered himself as pilot, and Danforth accepted his services, and when a sail was sighted, which Pilot Vint said was the Ocean Ruby, he felt there could be no mistake, and congratulated himself upon having affairs go just as he had intended they should.

CHAPTER XL.

FOILED.

THAT the sloop's crew saw the brig and knew her there was no manner of doubt; but she came on her way, without swerving a point from her course.

As she drew near to the brig, Captain Danforth said:

"Lieutenant Reddington, throw a shot across yonder craft's bows to bring her to."

It was a common occurrence for the brig to bring to and board vessels in protecting the interests of the Government, so there was nothing thought of the order and it was quickly obeyed.

But there was some surprise manifested when Captain Danforth said, as the sloop promptly obeyed the iron command and lay to:

"Lower a boat, sir, and I will board the sloop."

The curiosity of Ferd Lucas was excited to know why his captain should do the duties of an under officer, and quick as a flash he had a boat lowered and was in the stern at the tiller himself.

Danforth had been busy with his thoughts, so did not notice the middy until they were rowing away from the brig, when he said, slowly:

"Why did you come, sir, in place of a coxswain?"

"I did not know, sir, but that, as you went yourself, there might be some danger to you, so I came along, sir," was the quick response.

"Await orders to do so at another time."

"Ay, ay, sir," and Ferd winked his lee eye at the sergeant of marines, who, with four men, the captain had ordered to come along.

Boarding the sloop, Captain Danforth saw but four men on deck.

"What sloop is this?"
 "The Ocean Ruby, sir."
 "Where from?"
 "New Orleans, sir, and bound to Mobile."
 "Who is her skipper?"
 "Skipper Fenton, sir, of Mobile."
 "He is not on board?"
 "No, sir."
 "Who is acting skipper now?"
 "I am, sir."
 "Is there no one else on board?"
 "No, sir."
 "You are telling me the truth?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Where is the man that sailed this sloop to New Orleans?"
 "He left us there."

A frown was on the brow of Danforth, and he bit his lip viciously, as was his wont when angry.
 "How came he to leave you?"
 "I do not know, sir."
 "Did you not expect him to return with you?"

"Well, sir, we did not know."
 "He came on board with our skipper, and he left him in charge."

"Where can he be found in New Orleans?"
 "I think he left the city, sir, at once, for he bade us good-by, and said he was going away."

"What was his name?"
 "I declare I do not know, sir."
 "We called him Skipper, that was all."

"Well, my man, you may be telling me the truth, and I hope, for your own sake, that you are; but I shall have to satisfy myself, so throw open your cabin and hatches, that my men may search your sloop."

This was done, but the one sought for was not to be found, and the Ocean Ruby was allowed to go on her way, while the disappointed and angry Danforth returned to the Sentinel, determined to at once go to New Orleans.

So the Sentinel was headed for New Orleans, and the secret was out why Captain Danforth wished to overhaul the Ocean Ruby, for that gay youth, Ferd Lucas, had heard all and duly reported it to Ross Reddington.

In the mean time the sloop had gone on her way, and in due time dropped anchor off the home of her skipper, who went off with Ruby in a boat, expecting to find Kosta on board.

Their surprise was great when told he was not there, and the mate handed a package to the skipper, in which he said was a letter, while he added:

"There are some boxes in the hold for you and Miss Ruby, too, which the master sent."

"But why did he leave?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Did he give you no reason?"

"No, sir."

"Did nothing occur to make him leave?"

"Well, skipper, there was one thing that did occur, but we could not understand it."

"What was it?"

"Well, sir, it was just before we got up to the city, and we were becalmed in the river, so dropped anchor for the night close inshore, in the shadow of the trees."

"The night was dark, for the moon was not up, and it was cloudy, so we were told to turn in, and the master stood watch."

"We were awakened by a call from him, and when we got on deck he was gone, and with the boat."

"Then we heard shots fired down the river, but having no boat we could do nothing."

"Soon after the master passed on up the river, and I am sure there was some one in the boat with him, for we heard voices, and he called to us that he would soon return."

"It was two hours before he did so, and then he said nothing about what had happened."

"The next day we went up to the town, and there he left us."

"There were several people who called and asked when we got into port, and other questions; but we thought there was something suspicious about it, and evaded their questions."

"Just before we were ready to sail, the skipper returned and he made us all a present of a month's wages and a new suit of clothes, and sent this package and the boxes to you."

"Then he told us he was going far away, and said I was to bring the sloop back."

"That is all I know about him, skipper."

Mr. Fenton and Ruby were mystified; but the old skipper ordered the boxes put on shore and taken up to the cabin, and that the sloop should go on to her anchorage up to the town.

Then he and Ruby returned home and opened the package sent by that very mysterious personage the Sea Gipsy.

Upon opening the package a letter caught the eye of Ruby, and her father asked her to read it aloud.

It was dated at New Orleans, the day of the Ocean Ruby's sailing, and was as follows:

"MY ESTEEMED FRIEND:—

"Do not consider me ungrateful, I beg of you, for deserting the command that you gave to me; but circumstances render it necessary that I go upon certain imperative service which I consider it my duty to undertake."

"I therefore surrender the sloop to your very excellent mate."

"As I have received a certain sum, with which I

can afford to be generous, I beg that your daughter will accept from me the accompanying trinkets as a souvenir of one she befriended, and I send to you and to her a few things that may come useful in your home."

"With much gratitude for the kindnesses rendered me, and the hope that some day we may meet again, believe me

"Your attached friend."

There was no signature, and the writing was bold and legible.

The "trinkets" sent to Ruby were a handsome ruby ring and ear-drops of the same precious stones.

Then the boxes contained some silks, laces, cloth, and a number of little things to beautify their home, and which Ruby said was an elegant trousseau for her, should she ever marry.

"Father, who is that man?" she cried, in wonder.

"I can never tell you, my child."

"Why, these ear-drops and ring of rubies are worth a little fortune."

"Yes, what he has sent us would buy a small vessel," said the mystified skipper, and then they congratulated themselves upon their good fortune, and especially delighted were they for the escape of the Sea Gipsy, for the mate had also made known the fact that the Sentinel had brought the sloop to at sea and made search for Kosta.

Leaving the skipper and Ruby, both in a quandary over what had happened, but happy over their princely gifts, we will follow the Sentinel to New Orleans, where she went under a pressure of full sail, Captain Danforth hoping to find there the unknown pilot who had so cleverly given him the slip.

It was just before sunset when the Sentinel dropped anchor in front of the town, and soon after Danforth was rowed ashore, leaving his senior lieutenant in charge.

"He's just dressed up to kill," volunteered Ferd Lucas to the lieutenant.

"The captain?"

"Yes, sir."

"He did look more spry than usual."

"Oh! he had on the new uniform he had made in Mobile, and he's off for I know where."

"Where do you think, Ferd?"

"I know, sir."

"Where?"

"To see your old lady-love, sir."

"Miss Toinette Vallour?"

"Yes, sir."

"I believe you are right."

"I am sure I am."

"I did hear that she refused me to accept Captain Danforth."

"I hope she will not marry him, sir."

Reddington was silent, and the middy continued:

"Don't think I would speak against my captain, sir, to any one else; but you have been so kind to me, lieutenant, that when not on duty I feel as if you were an elder brother and my friend."

"Now I have heard it said that Miss Vallour was going to marry the captain, and I was sorry, for I know he will not make her happy, as you would, had she become your wife, and there are some that say he is only after her fortune."

"Why, I thought Captain Danforth was rich, Ferd?"

"So it is said, sir, but there are those who do not believe it, and one of them is this middy."

"He spends his money freely, at any rate, and all of us at times are a little pressed for funds."

"Yes, sir; I am at all times; but Captain Danforth bets heavily and is generally lucky."

"I know that he borrowed a thousand dollars from you, sir, and has never paid you back, though he got it before we went on our last cruise."

"I have never needed it, Ferd; but how did you know this, you young sailor detective?"

"He gave me some accounts to figure up the other day at sea, and by mistake handed me his own and not the ship's."

"I went to him, when I could not understand them, and told him there must be some mistake, and he was as hot as Lucifer, jerked them away from me, and handed me those he had meant to give me."

"There was quite a column of debts in the captain's account, and yours was on the list with the date, and did not have *paid* marked opposite to it, as others had."

"Well, he'll pay me all right; I do not doubt that, Ferd, while he can have more if he needs it; but still I would dislike to see Danforth marry beautiful Toinette Vallour, for I do not think he would make her happy."

"But we must not speak against our superior officer any more, or I shall have to order us both under arrest."

"What do you think, sir, he will do if he finds that unknown pilot here, for his lying in wait for the sloop shows that he is anxious to catch him?"

"I think he is only desirous of doing justice to the man."

"His leaping overboard in irons gave Captain

Danforth a fright, I saw, and he has heard rumors that cause him to dread that his conduct might be misunderstood, though, to do him justice, I do not think he intended other than good toward the poor fellow."

"Iron-handed goodness," muttered the middy, but Reddington heard the words, and laughed at the conceit.

It was after midnight when Captain Leo Danforth returned to his vessel, and as the middy caught sight of his face he saw that it was white and stern.

"Something has gone wrong with the admiral, that's certain, for his face is as black as a thunder-cloud."

"Wonder what it is that has stirred him up so?"

"Wish he'd tell me without my asking, for I'd sleep better," and Midshipman Ferd Lucas sought his hammock, glad to escape out of sight of the captain's angry face.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MAD CORSAIR.

WHEN Lindo the Sea Gipsy king fell in a swoon in his cabin, his captain, Vidal, was very much alarmed.

If the chief should be dead he might be accused of his murder.

He quickly called for help, and half a dozen men rushed in, and among them the young Gipsy surgeon of the schooner.

"He is in a swoon," he said, and he at once used restoratives.

"I was telling him of Carriza's ghost appearing often at the island, and that his brother's spirit had also been seen; but this he did not seem to mind; but when I told him his mother's grave had been opened, the body and the monument of shells taken, he gave a cry and fell upon the floor," explained Vidal.

When at last Lindo opened his eyes and saw the anxious faces bending over him, he recalled all that had been said by the captain of the Sea Cloud, and at once nerved himself to control all emotion.

"It is nothing, my people, only I heard bad news; the grave of my mother, queen of our people, has been despoiled, and I was seized with a momentary faintness."

"I am well now."

His looks belied his words, but he went on deck, not caring to ask Vidal more about what had happened at the Gipsies' Island.

That night, as soon as the shadows began to deepen after twilight, he took his drug and sought his couch, saying that he did not wish to be disturbed in the morning.

The sun was up when he at last awoke, and he smiled grimly when he thought how he had passed through the night without a horrid nightmare.

He took the reviving drug which Zampa had also given him, and felt better in a very short while.

A sail had been reported in sight, and after breakfast he went on deck to see the Sea Gipsy coming in, and with her a large vessel which she had made a prize.

Ramon, the captain of the Sea Gipsy, soon presented himself on board the Wind-Chaser, and made known that he had captured a valuable prize, though they had resisted him manfully.

"How many prisoners have you on board?" asked Lindo.

"Seven, only, sir, though as many were killed."

"Go on board your vessel and put them all to death."

Ramon started, as did also Vidal.

The Sea Gipsies had before that simply sent their prisoners to some port, and only those who resisted in battle were slain.

They looked at their king in surprise at this cruel order, and Ramon asked:

"Do you mean that they are really to be slain, King Lindo?"

"You heard my orders, Ramon."

"Yes, King Lindo, but—"

"If you are not going to obey, I will place an officer in charge of the Sea Gipsy who will do so, while you can serve as a seaman."

This was enough, and Ramon quickly bowed himself out of the cabin.

In half an hour he returned with the information that the prisoners had been executed.

"How?"

"Shot to death."

"You should have hanged them."

"Remember, no mercy is to be shown in future, and if prisoners are taken they must be put to death," sternly said Lindo.

"At times, sir, we take women," said Vidal.

"And children?" said Ramon.

"Kill them!"

The savage words fairly leaped from the mouth of the Sea Gipsy king, and his two captains were by no means sorry when he changed the subject by saying:

"We must change our island home, my captains."

"Change it, Lindo?" asked Vidal in surprise; for the island home of the Sea Gipsies had become greatly endeared to them, and, though wanderers, they had been loth to leave the beautiful spot where they then dwelt.

"Yes, we must find a spot here among these islands."

"We will sail in search of an island to-morrow, and going different courses each return here within the week."

"I will look at the islands you find, and if I like any better than what I have seen, we will locate there."

"Our people so dearly love the island where now they dwell," said Ramon.

"Yes, but it is haunted."

The men started again, and with this thought in mind they concluded it would be best to change their home.

"Keep the prize to carry with you, and aid in bringing our people to their new home."

"When we find a suitable island, you can go with your vessels and the prize after our people, while I will land my force and await your coming, the crew doing what work we can to prepare for you."

Of course the two captains assented, for they could do nothing else, but they did not observe why their king would not go back to the Gipsies' Island to tell his people of his intended removal of them.

King Lindo had no idea of going to a vicinity where the ghosts of Carriza and his brother Kosta were said to be cruising around and the grave of his mother had been vacated.

For some reason they could not understand, the manner and look of Lindo impressed the two captains unfavorably, and they were glad to be dismissed from his presence.

The next day the three vessels sailed in search of a new home for the Sea Gipsies, leaving the prize at the rendezvous.

Within a week the three schooners had returned, and one of them brought back a prize.

It was the Wind-Chaser, and she had captured a Cuban *goleta*, and the crew had been promptly put to death by the Sea Gipsy king, who seemed to revel in mad acts of cruelty.

An island had also been found by Lindo which suited him exactly, and thither the four vessels sailed, for the two captured craft followed in the wake under the prize-crews.

The island was hard of access, and a channel had only been found with the boats after a long search.

It was much larger than the Gipsies' Island, and there was every prospect that it could be made a most lovely dwelling-place, while the harbor was spacious and deep.

Allowing his captains to take barely men enough to work the four vessels to the Sea Gipsies' Island, Lindo landed the others upon their new abiding-place and set them to work preparing for the coming of their tribe.

Weeks passed away and the "Mad King," as some of his men now thought him, began to grow anxious and storm at the delay.

His drug was nearly exhausted, and if he lost that which gave him oblivion at night, he felt that he would go mad in earnest, or take his own life.

But one day several sails were sighted, and soon after the Sea Gipsy came, leading the fleet.

She had on board the Council of Twelve and Zampa, with his laboratory, and Lindo welcomed the Gipsy doctor with a warmth that was surprising.

But only Zampa knew the reason.

One by one the vessels began to arrive, the Gipsy fleet and their prizes, and at last all had dropped anchor in the little harbor.

The men with Lindo had not been idle, and beacons had been erected at various points, so that a vessel's pilot, knowing the course well, could run in by day or night, in quiet or storm.

The Sea Gipsies, with blind faith in the laws that made their chief their master, uttered no murmur at the change, and set about building their homes and making themselves comfortable.

Having given his orders as to the village, his own cottage and the public buildings to be built, the Sea Gipsy king decided to sail the next day with his three schooners to again begin his career of piracy.

The rapid wealth which had accumulated under the black flag of the Gipsy Corsairs had instilled in the strange people a desire to have the three schooners constantly cruising at sea as corsairs, and they schooled themselves to bear their losses of kindred that must occur for the sake of the treasure that was gained thereby.

"I will remain over night on the island, just to assure myself that I am not haunted here by Carriza's ghost, and then I will sail, for I will have a haven to return to, which I had not at the old island, Zampa," said Lindo to the young Gipsy doctor, as they sat alone that afternoon in the cabin of the Wind-Chaser.

Zampa gave the king his drugs, told him how to take them, as before, and took his departure, telling him he would go and overlook the work going on among the people.

It was just sunset when Lindo left his vessel and climbed up to the hill which Zampa had selected for his cottage.

As night came on King Lindo grew nervous, and he was anxious to be near the young Gipsy doctor.

They seated themselves upon the cliff, looking

out over the waters, and then sat talking until night came on.

At length Lindo said:

"Well, I will go down through the village and bid my people adieu, after which I will retire, for I sail at dawn."

"Come, Zampa, accompany me."

They both arose, and, turning, beheld two white forms not thirty paces from them.

They stood out boldly in the moonlight, and Lindo uttered a cry of terror, while he shouted:

"See! Do you not see? There they are!"

"I am haunted here, for they are the ghosts of Carriza and Kosta."

"Come, oh, come, good Zampa, and take me to my schooner, for I must fly from here."

"Alas! alas! I am haunted here, there, everywhere, and I shall go mad! mad! mad!"

He trembled like a child, and Zampa hastened away with him, leaving the two white-robed forms gazing after them.

As they were descending the hill a wild, mocking laughter was heard, and Lindo groaned:

"It is her voice, her laughter."

"Let us hasten, good Zampa," and Lindo fairly dragged the Gipsy doctor down the hill, and, not tarrying among his people, as had been his intention, he hastened on board his vessel, gave the signal to get under way, and soon after the three schooners were standing out to sea under full sail.

As he glanced back at the cliff, Lindo uttered a groan, for then he beheld the two white-robed forms standing gazing after the departing vessels.

"I am a haunted man, and I shall go mad," came in low tones from Lindo's lips, and he hastened into his cabin, threw himself upon his couch and dashed off the draught of oblivion.

CHAPTER XLII.

METAMORPHOSED.

WHEN Kosta reached the town the next day, after his rescue of the maiden from the pirates, as the mate had told the skipper, he left the sloop in his charge, going no one knew whither.

His first steps were, however, toward the shop of a money-lender, and he placed before him a diamond of great beauty and of large size.

"Will you buy this stone of me?" he asked the money-lender.

After a careful consideration of the gem the money-lender said:

"I will give you two thousand dollars for it, sir."

"It is worth five thousand dollars."

"Ah! you think so?"

"I know so."

"I will double my offer, for it is a fine stone."

"Give me the value of the stone, less a handsome profit for yourself, for you know its value as well as I do."

"Here are four thousand five hundred dollars."

"I will take it, and I will have more to sell, that is if you can keep still about it."

"I know how to hold my tongue, sir."

Kosta took the money and left the shop, and made his way rapidly to another one, where all kinds of things were sold, mostly second-hand.

He entered, called the shopman one side and made a number of purchases, ordering them to be sent to a certain address, an inn near the river.

Then he made other purchases and these were taken down to the sloop, as the reader is aware, divided between the crew, and sent to Skipper Fenton and Ruby.

Having gotten rid of his purchases, Kosta went to the inn, which he knew, having often before stopped there, and was shown to a pleasant room, where he found the purchases he had made for his own use.

An hour after, in the fashionably dressed gentleman that came out of the inn and entered a carriage, few persons would have recognized the Sea Gipsy sailor who had been master of the sloop.

His bearing was erect, his appearance elegant, and manners most courtly, while a diamond of rare worth glittered in his black silk scarf, and watch-chain of exquisite workmanship crossed his velvet vest.

Upon the small finger of his left hand was a ruby of large size, and its crimson sparkles showed its purity.

The carriage stopped with him at the door of the Hotel St. Luis, the fashionable resort then of the Crescent City, and his baggage soon followed.

Upon the register of the hotel the Sea Gipsy wrote as follows:

"VICTOR BENZOTA,

Mexico."

He surprised, and pleased, of course, the landlord, by asking for the best suit of rooms in the hotel, and the news rapidly spread that a Mexican *caballero* of vast wealth was stopping at the Hotel St. Luis, while it was said that he was young, most distinguished-looking, and had to remain for some time in the city.

Having established himself in his luxurious quarters, Victor Benzota, as he now called him-

self, purchased a fine riding horse and handsome team for his carriage.

A coachman and groom were engaged, then a valet, and they were attired in the picturesque costumes of Mexico, while he took good care to secure servants who could speak Spanish.

His crest, people observed, were a pair of swords crossed over an anchor, the hilts of gold, the blades red and the anchor of silver.

When once the stranger was seen on horseback, attired in his rich Mexican dress, with gold spurs and gold-mounted bridle and saddle, all fashionable society was agog to meet him.

A stern-faced, silent man he seemed, handsome, courtly, and yet one whom no one would care to familiarly approach.

Several of the planters near the town, and some of the prominent citizens called on him, and his fascination of manner quite won their hearts, and invitations flowed in upon him from all sides, and at last he made his entrance into the charmed circle of the *bon ton* of the Crescent City.

Having decided upon his course and metamorphosed himself completely, Victor Benzota went in various disguises to the money-lender and disposed of precious gems until he had a large bank account, equal for his needs were he a prince in reality upon his travels.

The clothing which had given him a means of starting upon his new career, was quickly thrown aside for new, made of the richest materials, until the young bloods of the town regretted that it was not the style for every one to wear the Mexican dress, so becoming was it.

The evening upon which the Sea Gipsy, so completely metamorphosed, was to make his *entree* into society came around, and eager were all to meet him.

It was known that he spoke the purest Castilian Spanish, while his English and French were perfect, so that the belles were not fearful of being unable to converse with him.

It was hinted that the Mexican owned vast mines in Mexico, and others said that he was on secret service for his Government.

His knowledge of the navies of the world and sea life caused not a few to think him an officer of the Mexican Navy, gaining information for his Government from the vessels of the United States.

And so rumor was busy, and yet no one could say they knew more of him than that he lived in luxury, had plenty of money, rode a horse like a Centaur and was registered as

"VICTOR BENZOTA,

"Mexico."

A distinguished citizen had invited him to grace an entertainment at his elegant house with his presence, adding:

"You will meet there, Don,"—they had dubbed the supposed Mexican with the title of Don—"our greatest beauty, Mademoiselle Toinette Vallour, the richest young lady in Louisiana, and who belongs to one of our oldest Creole families."

"To know her is to love her, and yet they say that a gallant naval officer, Captain Leo Danforth, is to win her for a wife."

"She is the heroine of a most thrilling adventure, too, a few nights ago, when she was kidnapped by pirates, an old rejected lover too, by the way, who turned buccaneer, and was rescued by some unknown sailor."

"It was before my arrival, señor, but I have heard it spoken of."

"Did she not discover her rescuer?"

"No; and there lies the mystery, for he refused even to give her his name, and though her father, Judge Vallour, visited all of the vessels in the harbor looking for him, he could not discover the unknown rescuer."

"Strange, very, señor."

"Yes, for the judge would make him rich indeed, while Mademoiselle Vallour says she half fell in love with the man, dark as it was, from his tender sympathy, daring rescue and strangely musical voice."

"He would be happy indeed to win half of her love, for I had the honor of seeing her, while out riding several days ago."

"But you say she is engaged to Captain Danforth?"

"No, it is not assured; but he is most devoted to her, and is considered a good catch."

And so the Sea Gipsy decided to go to the entertainment, and his entrance into the brilliantly lighted parlors created a great flutter of excitement.

Perfectly at ease, courtly as a cavalier, and strikingly handsome and distinguished looking, with his tall, superb form, he greeted his host and was presented to his hostess.

Those who had expected to see a dark-haired, black-eyed man with saturnine face, were surprised to see just the opposite in a Mexican, as they supposed him to be.

"Don Benzota, permit me to present you to Mademoiselle Vallour," said his host, leading the Sea Gipsy up to a window where Toinette Vallour stood conversing with several gentlemen, who fell back before the "Don."

Their eyes met, and the Sea Gipsy felt that

he had never looked into a more beautiful face, while he murmured:

"And this is the beautiful being that I rescued?"

"She is as beautiful as was my mother at her age, and—I will love her, yes, madly worship her."

He was about to offer his arm for a promenade, when up came an officer of the navy, in the handsome uniform of a captain.

"Why, Captain Danforth, I am glad to see you; but when did you return from sea?" said Toinette Vallour, holding forth her small gloved hand.

"Only to-night, Miss Vallour, and calling upon you, to learn you were here, and knowing that I was welcome at Mr. Cerras's house I took the liberty of coming."

"Permit me to present you, Captain Danforth, to Don Benzota, of Mexico."

Leo Danforth started as he looked into the face of the man before him.

It was strangely familiar.

But the Don bowed low, and said in his deep, musical voice:

"I am happy in meeting Captain Danforth, of whom we have often heard in our country."

"You are kind, sir; but have we not met before, for your face fairly haunts me?"

"Doubtless in Vera Cruz, Havana, Brazil perhaps, for you as a sailor have visited many lands, and I have been an extensive traveler."

Leo Danforth was puzzled, and not liking Toinette Vallour in such fascinating company, he sought to draw her away; but she claimed an engagement with Don Benzota and walked off, leaning upon his arm.

And it was because Leo Danforth could not see Toinette alone during the evening, and heard remarks about the Don "cutting him out," that made him leave early and visit a gambling *salon*, where he soon lost half a year's pay in his reckless playing, spurred on as he was by his jealousy of the Sea Gipsy.

Thus it was that he reached his vessel after midnight, with the clouded brow and white face which caused Midshipman Ferd Lucas to comment upon his appearance.

Had he but suspected who the Don was, the middy would have had further cause for comment.

CHAPTER XLIII. AN ANGRY SAILOR.

THE day following the first appearance in society of Don Victor Benzota, was a busy one among the fashionable people, for all went on a round of visits to know just what was thought of the new "lion."

Had Leo Danforth heard the gossip about his being shown the "cold shoulder" for the Don by Toinette Vallour, his ears would have burned to blisters.

The universal comment of all was that the Don was vastly rich.

Of course that was the foundation upon which all of his other fascinating qualities were built.

Then it was decided that he was the handsomest man seen in the Crescent City for many a long day; his manners were most courtly, his voice was musical, his form perfect, bearing most soldierly, and in fact there was not a word against him among the fair sex, no matter how much the beaux, dimmed by his luster, might growl in secret.

As for Captain Danforth, he took a late breakfast, and that he arose in ill-humor may be implied from the remark of Ferd Lucas to a brother middy:

"The admiral is sulky to-day."

After breakfast Danforth dressed himself with unusual care and left the brig, the expression on his face showing that he meant to do some bold deed.

A number of other naval officers in port had already come off the brig to call on their friends, and several of them had been at the Cerras entertainment the night before, and one at the gambling *salon* where Danforth lost so heavily, so that Ferd's curiosity was gratified, and he knew the cause of his commander's anger.

"The fair Vallour seemed to take to the Don more kindly last night than to Danforth."

"It was a clear case of snub for your admiral," said a young officer to Fred.

"Well, our admiral will have to call out the Don and kill him," the middy replied.

"He had better not, for if there is not a slumbering devil in that Don, which it would be dangerous to arouse, I am no judge of human nature, and I've got an idea that he's one to enjoy a duel."

While this conversation was going on, Leo Danforth was making his way to the house of Judge Pierre Vallour.

The mansion was the most stately private house in the town, stood near the river, and was surrounded with several acres of beautiful grounds.

The judge had been a very rich man, and his wife had brought him a fortune superior to his own, and her brother's fortune Toinette had inherited at her death, several years before, while she was the only heir of her father.

Besides the town property, which was considerable, there were cotton and sugar plantations on the river with several hundred slaves, so that the hand of Toinette Vallour was well worth the winning.

It was a beautiful morning, and as fresh and beautiful as the roses she was culling in the garden, looked Toinette as she saw Leo Danforth approaching her.

She met him pleasantly with a clasp of her little hand, and then led him to an arbor near by, in which were some rustic seats.

"You left early last night?" she said, inquiringly.

"Yes, for I saw that my place was usurped by another," was the almost sullen response.

"Where was your place?"

"By your side."

"Indeed! and who gave you the right, my dear captain, to a claim to be ever by my side?"

"You have."

"Oh, no."

"In actions, if not by words."

"I fear you have misunderstood me."

"I have tried to understand that you loved me."

"Ah, Captain Danforth, you have indeed misunderstood me to think so."

"You refused my Lieutenant Reddington, and I had the vanity to believe that it was for my sake."

"Your vanity is appalling."

"I refused Lieutenant Reddington's offer because I did not love him as he asked, though I know no man I respect or regard more highly, and really, I do not believe he loved me as much as he imagined."

"And you do not love me?"

"I do not, though rumor has it that we are engaged; and, candidly, I have been unkind enough to almost suspect that you originated the gossip."

"Miss Vallour!"

"Pardon me, but Miss Cerras asked you if we were engaged, and you would not say that we were not, and thus the rumor started."

"I am sorry, but I meant not to so have her understand."

"But do you not know, Miss Vallour, that I have loved you with all my heart from our first meeting?"

"You have never told me so."

"I have tried to show it without words, for actions speak louder."

"I am very sorry, but I do not love you."

"But I may hope—"

"No, I can never love you."

His brow darkened, and he said, sharply:

"You love another?"

"No, I am wholly untrammelled in my affections; but—"

"Well, Miss Vallour?"

"You may not have heard of an adventure I had some nights ago, and how I was rescued?"

"Yes, I heard it last night from other lips than yours."

"Well, Captain Danforth, who my rescuer was I do not know, and I would not know his face were I to see it, for it was intensely dark."

"But his voice influenced me in a strange way; it was so full of pathos, music, and, can I say, love?"

"If I were to meet that man I fear I should love him, be he what he may, and my attraction to the Don last night was because his voice was strangely like my rescuer's, rather than from his powers of fascination, which, I admit, are great."

"Yes; you seemed to be enraptured with the Don."

"I will not allow you to speak so, Captain Danforth."

"He certainly was with you."

"Don't let your disappointment cause you to show an ugly nature, or I will think it natural to you— Oh! there comes the Don now."

"Come and meet him with me."

"No, I must depart."

And Leo Danforth took his leave, bowing stiffly to the Don as he passed, and muttering to himself:

"Curses on that man! but for his coming I would have won Toinette Vallour."

"He has fascinated her, for I saw that much last night."

"Who is he, and what?"

"I have met him before I am certain."

"By heaven! but I'll force a quarrel on him and kill him, for no man has ever yet proven my superior with the sword."

With this determination Captain Danforth retired on board ship in a very ugly humor.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A DUEL.

HAVING made up his mind to cut short the career of Don Victor Benzota, before he "captured the town," as he expressed it, Captain Leo Danforth sought an opportunity in which he could get into a quarrel with him with honor to himself.

The Don having entered society, was nightly a guest at some fashionable abode, and became more and more a lion.

His carriage and horses were superior to any others on the shell road.

His horsemanship was something to command universal admiration, and his generosity and charity were known to be unbounded, for many a poor person received aid at his hands, and often had a fast youth gotten a "loan for a few days only" from the liberal-handed Sea Gipsy.

Toinette Vallour had accompanied him on several horseback rides, and rumor already had it that Captain Danforth was forgotten when the Don was near.

Having accepted hospitalities from various persons, Don Benzota determined to return the favors as best he could, so he gave an entertainment at the Hotel St. Luis.

Those who attended were compelled to admit that never before, in the history of the Crescent City, had there been anything quite so grand as the "Don's Ball."

Every guest was presented with a souvenir of some kind, the floral display was Edenlike, the music enchanting and the handsome Don was the most charming of hosts.

The officers all of the Sentinel were invited, and Ross Reddington, who was there, said to Toinette Vallour, with whom he was dancing:

"If you can marry that man, Toinette Vallour, do so, for I never saw a nobler specimen of the *genus homo*."

"So I think of him, Ross; but where is Danforth to-night?"

"Sulking, as he has been ever since we came into port, from some cause, and I guess you know."

"Why should I?"

"You cannot deceive me, Toinette, for you have refused Danforth and I am glad of it; but don't throw the Don away, and Ferd yonder will tell you the same, for he is in raptures over the Mexican."

"But somewhere before I have met him, though where and when I cannot recall, and Ferd says the same."

"So does your captain, and Don Benzota suggested that it might have been in Vera Cruz, Havana, or South America, as you naval officers roam the world over."

"Perhaps," and Reddington yielded his fair partner to another who claimed her for a dance, and who was none other than Midshipman Ferd Lucas, who remarked:

"Miss Toinette, I wish you had a younger sister?"

"And why, Sir Middy?"

"So I could love her."

"You are just like the rest of your sex, Ferd," laughed Toinette, and his dance being over the middy resigned Toinette to the Don.

After the guests had departed, the Don strolled out into the rotunda of the hotel with Lieutenant Reddington and Ferd, whom he had detained from the others for a glass of wine with him.

As they did so Leo Danforth advanced rapidly toward them.

His face was livid and his eyes glared, while he said in a suppressed voice:

"Sir Mexican, I know you now—you are a deserter from my ship!"

The face of the Sea Gipsy did not change an atom, while he replied in his deep tones:

"Captain Danforth, you are a liar!"

"Hail this to me!" and Danforth attempted to strike the Don.

But his hand was grasped with a force that he was powerless to resist, and his arm was bent backward until he almost swooned with pain.

Then came the words:

"If you have a grievance with me, Captain Danforth, settle it like a man, not as a rowdy would."

"By Heaven, sir, but I will."

"My dear captain, you have made a sad mistake, for though this gentleman is strikingly like our mysterious pilot was, he is not, he cannot be one and the same," said Reddington.

"He looks it, and the remembrance came to me; but I will not retract my words," assured Danforth.

"Does that mean a meeting, sir?" calmly asked the Don.

"It certainly does, so name your friend."

"May I ask you to serve me, sir?" and he turned to Ferd Lucas who promptly replied:

"With the permission of Captain Danforth, with pleasure, sir."

"You have my permission, Lucas, and, Reddington, I must ask your services."

"With pleasure, captain, though I regret this affair exceedingly, and cannot but think you were wrong."

"In my mistaking him for the deserter doubtless, though I thought so at the time; but it was said, he gave me the lie, and a duel must follow."

It did not take the lieutenant and middy long to arrange the terms, and at daylight the carriage of Don Benzota drove away from the hotel, and in it was the Sea Gipsy and the middy.

A town vehicle soon followed from the shore, bearing Danforth, Lieutenant Reddington and the surgeon of the brig.

The sun was rising as the vehicles drew upon the field, and the swords, the weapons of the duel, were quickly in the hands of the principals.

Don calm and indifferent, the captain pale and with a deadly glitter in his eyes that boded no good to his foe.

With the crossing of the blades, Reddington and the midly held their breath, for they knew their captain's skill and saw that he meant to kill the Don if in his power.

But their anxiety faded ere half-a-dozen passes were made, as the Don, they saw, was fairly playing with the captain.

After a short while he sent the sword of Danforth flying from his hand, and said politely:

"I trust, señor, that this ends the war between us."

Danforth was livid with rage, and without replying to the Don turned to Reddington and demanded another meeting, and with pistols.

The lieutenant urged, but it was no use, and deeply pained he turned to Ferd Lucas and made the demand.

The Don heard it and said in his quiet way:

"Señor Lucas, kindly say that I spared the life of Captain Danforth, and that there is no need for the farce to be repeated; let me show you that he will be at my mercy."

"Pedro!"

"Señor!" called out the groom whom the Don had addressed, and he approached.

"Here, catch this gold-piece—there! Now hold it up with your thumb and forefinger encircling it—that is right."

"Now, Señor Lucas, that pistol, please."

Quick as a flash he fired and the gold-piece, encircled by the fingers of Pedro, the footman, was doubled up by the bullet.

"Better that piece of gold than Captain Danforth's heart, Señor Lucas," said the Don, and raising his hat to Reddington he took the midly's arm and walked to his carriage.

As for Leo Danforth he was utterly dazed with wonder, and was quietly led away by his lieutenant, who said:

"It is no dishonor, Danforth, to be defeated by such a man."

"He is a marvel."

"And I was wrong, utterly so."

"Let us drive to the hotel and I will tell him so."

Half an hour after, the party were eating breakfast in the Don's apartments; but that strange resemblance to the fugitive pilot still rankled in Danforth's heart against the Mexican.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DON GOES ON A CRUISE.

Of course the duel could not be kept secret, for too many had heard the insult offered by Danforth, and who also heard the lie given by the Don.

Of course, too, there were curious people who had gone to the field, and from a covert hiding-place witnessed the affair as it was, and the Don was more of a hero than ever.

At the very first indication he had that the affair was town talk, Danforth decided to set sail and go on a cruise.

He needed more men for his crew, but did not remain to ship them, and it took Ross Reddington but a very short while to convince his captain that Mobile was a better place to ship a crew than any other spot on earth.

This was the opinion of Ross Reddington as it was the home of Ruby Fenton.

So to Mobile the Sentinel sailed, and the lieutenant was as happy as his commander was correspondingly miserable.

One of the first things which the Don had done, after his arrival in New Orleans, was to order a large schooner built upon a model and rig which he himself furnished, and the builders were told to spare no expense or work.

A battery was also ordered for this schooner, and the Don placed it in the hands of a competent man to get him a crew for his vessel of the very best men he could find, and to drill them at the guns, on board of an old hulk daily.

As if to avoid notoriety, after his duel, the Don also suddenly departed, and rumor had it that he had purchased a pretty little twenty-ton yacht from a planter, and, with a crew of half a dozen men, his valet and a cook had gone on a pleasure cruise in the waters of the Gulf.

The little vessel which the Don had purchased was a trim craft, built for speed as well as comfort, and she had sailed out of the Mississippi and shaped her course toward the Florida Coast.

Whither she was bound, not one man on board knew, and he was the controlling spirit!

The crew quickly discovered that the Mexican señor, as they supposed him to be, was a better sailor than they were, and they attended to their duties with the air of men who knew they had a master.

After being several days away from port, the Sea Gipsy who was on deck one afternoon toward sunset, with glass to his eye, suddenly sighted land.

"Yes, it is the Grave Isle, and it will be a couple of hours after dark when I reach it," he said.

And, just two hours after nightfall the little yacht sailed into the cove of Grave Island and dropped anchor.

"I will go ashore alone," said the Don, as he entered the boat belonging to the yacht, and he pulled away for the shore.

Landing he saw that there was another boat there, and he approached it quickly.

It was drawn up on the sandy shore, but had evidently not been there long, and after examining it as well as he could by starlight, he said:

"It is Zampa's boat; but why is it here, and at night, for I never knew any of our people to come here at any time, other than with my father."

"I must be careful, for there may be others, and I would not be seen."

Cautiously he walked further inland and presently came to another skiff, drawn up in a small arm of water that ran back from the cove.

"Why this is my skiff! The very one that got adrift the night I came here in my despair."

"There is some strange mystery in this, and some one is certainly on the island."

Again he advanced and suddenly stopped, for he beheld a glimmer of light in the timber ahead.

With great care he approached the light, for he knew not just what he had to face.

As he did so, to his surprise, in the midst of a pine thicket, the outline of a small cabin took shape, and the light came from a window in one end.

Approaching this window, the shutter being open, he saw the interior of the cabin.

A light burned upon a shelf, revealing all distinctly, and there were two persons within.

They were talking, and he heard their words.

One was Zampa, and the other was Carriza, and, to his surprise, the maiden wore her hair loosely flowing down her back, and her dress was white, with long trail and flowing sleeves.

She was seated upon a rude bench, and before her, leaning against the cabin door was Zampa.

What they said was plainly heard by Kosta, the Sea Gipsy.

Carriza was saying:

"Ah, Zampa, I would not be human to refuse such devoted love as you offer."

"Where would I be now but for that love?"

"When Lindo so cruelly punished noble Kosta and usurped the place of king, I saw that he meant to rule with an iron hand."

"He drove Kosta forth to die in the tempest-swept sea, and, when I refused his love he condemned me to death."

"Well, I obeyed as a true Sea Gipsy, and took the poison he gave, and, but for your great knowledge of drugs, and your love, I would have now been infolded in chains at the bottom of the sea."

"I have often wondered how it was that you managed with Lunak and Nunez, who came out with you to bury me."

"I drugged a flask of wine for them, suggested a drink, and gave them that which held them unconscious for several hours, pretending also to drink myself."

"I then brought you here, placed you upon the fine straw, and put before your eyes the letter which I had written you, explaining all, and telling you I would come with food, clothing and all you needed."

"A white robe I had brought with me I filled with sand, placed it on your bier in the boat, and rowed back out upon the sea."

"Then I gave the two men a reviving powder, and sunk into the boat, pretending to be unconscious."

"They revived, and then set to work to revive me, and I snapped the chains about the sand form and we sunk it in the sea, and it was reported as you."

"You remember that I urged you to punish Lindo for his mercilessness to you and to Kosta, and the night we all went out to welcome Luna, I never saw anything seem so spirit-like as you looked."

"I fairly feared you myself, and no wonder that Lindo, with his guilty conscience, set the example of flight, and all sped away for the island."

"You have played your part well, but the end is not yet."

"What do you mean, Zampa?"

"Yampal, your brother, is the only one besides myself that knows you are not dead, and I have had to have his aid in various ways, for it has been a hard thing to get you food and all you needed and not arouse some suspicion of me."

"Indeed, it must have been, Zampa."

"Now Lindo suffers agony of remorse and fear, I think more the latter."

"He takes a drug every night, as I before told you, to drown thought or dreams, and when you appeared to him, as I asked, and warned him not to go upon his piratical cruise, I hoped it would prevent him from doing so."

"But he has gone, and our people seem glad to have a chance of growing rich quickly by piracy."

"My idea is that Lindo will not dare come back to the island himself, but will send his prizes in by Vidal or Ramon on the Sea Gipsy and Sea Cloud, yet will not, of course, let his crew know why he does not come."

"Now I am anxious to get up another specter, and let it represent Kosta, and I am sure if

Vidal and Ramon come and report that Kosta's spirit has also been seen, Lindo will never return."

"If he remains away a year, you know, by Gipsy law, the Council of Twelve can elect another king, and I trust one will be selected who will put his foot down against piracy, and rule our people with kindness, as the old king did, and as Kosta would have done, had he not died."

"Noble Kosta, he was indeed made to suffer; but whom can you get to represent his ghost, Zampa?"

"I am making up a mask that you can put on, and in the night no one will doubt its being Kosta's ghost, and, once it is reported to Lindo, he will never come back here, or he will go mad."

"A just punishment would be madness, Zampa, after all he has done."

"Yes; and he is half-mad now with fear."

"Well, Zampa, I will do all I can to carry out your plans as you wish."

"My plan is to punish Lindo, and to see a just ruler over our people."

"I loved Kosta, and I will avenge the cowardly brother who treated him as he did and sent him forth to die."

"You are a noble man, Zampa, and I would that Kosta was alive to know of your friendship for him."

"It is no stronger than my love for you, Carriza."

"And I love you in return, Zampa, for how could I help it?"

"And your love for Kosta is buried with him?"

"Oh, yes; indeed, so well have you won me by your devotion, that, were Kosta even here I would not be false to my love for you now."

Zampa stepped quickly forward and clasped the maiden in his arms, while Kosta hastily retreated to a short distance and called out loudly:

"Ho! Zampa! Zampa!"

The young Sea Gipsy started and Carriza turned deadly pale.

"It is Kosta's voice," cried Zampa.

"It is," whispered Carriza.

"Can such things be?" Zampa asked, though in an unnerved way.

"It is his ghost! after all there are such things, Zampa."

"Ho, Zampa, where are you, for your boat is here, and I know you are near."

"Come, old friend, and welcome your old Kosta."

"By Luna's light! but that is Kosta in the flesh."

And Zampa darted out of the cabin followed by Carriza.

In a moment more they were face to face, and Zampa cried:

"Kosta in flesh, or in spirit, I greet you!"

"In flesh, my friend, for I did not die as you supposed."

"I landed here but half an hour ago, recognized your boat, then my skiff, saw the cabin, heard all that passed between you, and here I am."

"Carriza, my sister, for as such you shall be to me, thrice welcome!"

What a meeting it was there on that Grave Island, and Kosta quickly told of his adventures, which he bade them keep as a secret, and more he added:

"I am now having built a vessel the counterpart of the Wind-Chaser, and will start on a cruise to hunt my false brother from the seas, for I will destroy every Gipsy who fights under a pirate flag."

Then it was decided that Kosta should remain upon the island a week merely to "play specter" for the benefit of Lindo, when he should hear of it.

So the little yacht was sent off for a week's cruise, Kosta telling the sailing-master just when to return and by night, and Kosta remained on the island, and Zampa returned to the Gipsies' Island.

And each night Kosta and Carriza would go in their skiffs, robed in white, and run actually into the harbor of the Gipsies' Isle, and thus it was that Vidal returned some time after to the rendezvous in the Bahamas and reported to King Lindo that his brother's ghost had also been seen.

At the Gipsies' Island, hidden away, Kosta had his own little fortune in gold, and this Zampa secured and brought to him, Yampal, who was in the secret, accompanying him.

It was Kosta's intention to remove his mother's remains away from that dreary isle, and place them in the land of her people, erecting a costly monument over them.

So by day he, Yampal who pretended to be sick at home, and Carriza, worked taking down the monument of shells, which was indeed a unique piece of art, and the remains were taken up and placed in a stout coffin, which Zampa made and brought over for the purpose.

At the end of the week the yacht returned, and keeping his friends out of sight, Kosta had his men come on shore and carry the coffin and the shells on board, simply saying that one he

loved had been buried there, and he meant to take the remains to another burying-place.

When his crew returned to the yacht, Kosta remained to bid farewell to the three who loved him so well, and to tell them that before very long there would be an end of piracy, and the Sea Gipsies would have another king.

Then he went on board his little yacht, which set sail for the shores of Lake Borgne, not far from New Orleans, and there, upon a point of land within sound of the surging sea, a grave was dug one night and the body of poor Victoire Enders, the bride of the Sea Gipsy king, was laid to rest.

When the yacht reached New Orleans, Kosta took workmen to the spot where his mother was buried, and had a monument erected over her, a marble base with the column of sea-shells, and though the finger of time has fallen heavily upon it, in the long years that have passed, it remains a ruined tomb, few knowing the romantic mystery of the young life of her whose ashes rest beneath.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE SEA GIPSY SETS SAIL.

THE Sentinel had not been very long in Mobile, and the work of shipping more men for her crew was progressing slowly, in spite of Lieutenant Reddington's assertion that that was the "very port to get seamen," when orders came to Captain Danforth to put to sea at once.

The cause of this peremptory order was made known in the fact that a buccaneer fleet was playing havoc in the Gulf and Southern Atlantic with merchant vessels of all flags.

A Spanish cruiser sent out in search of the pirates had been pounced upon, and, like wolves worrying a lion to death, they had sunk the Spaniard with all on board.

An English brig-of-war had also been beaten off by the fierce pack of pirate craft, and a French vessel had not dared try conclusions with the merciless outlaws, but had taken to flight.

The chief of this band of pirates was known as the "Sea King" only, and he was said to show no mercy to man, woman or child, in fact was a human monster.

With such a foe afloat, preying upon the commerce of America, and other nations, the Sentinel was ordered to "hunt down the buccaneers and hang them without mercy."

In those early days of our country's history, tragic deeds were of constant occurrence, and the seas echoed with the guns of bold corsairs seeking gold at the cannon's mouth and the point of the cutlass.

The Gulf, West Indian waters and Caribbean Sea swarmed with freebooters, and many a fine vessel never reached port, which they had sent to the bottom.

Under the pressure of his orders, Captain Danforth got together all the seamen necessary, and set sail at once on his hunt for the Sea King buccaneer.

Although Mobile had not proven a good place for shipping a crew with dispatch, it had certainly proven to be an excellent place for love-making, and so successful was Ross Reddington, in his siege of Ruby Fenton's heart, that he sailed away with her promise to become his wife at his next visit to port.

In the mean time the Mexican Don was all the rage in New Orleans.

He had returned from his cruise without offering an explanation to any one, and no one had had the temerity to ask him where he had been.

His duel with Captain Danforth had by no means been forgotten, and, when asked about it by Judge Vallour and Mr. Cerras, who were dining with him, he merely said that his likeness to a man whom Captain Danforth had said deserted from his vessel, had caused the naval officer, in a fit of anger, to accuse him of being the deserter, an accusation he had promptly stamped as false.

"As to the duel," he added, "it was but a slight affair."

"Danforth was angry and I was cool, so disarmed him, and not wishing to kill him, for he is a gallant fellow, I simply showed him that I could do so by shooting a gold-piece from the hand of my footman."

"And Toinette has that piece of gold, bent as it is, for Lieutenant Reddington gave it to her as a souvenir of your aim," said the judge.

Kosta's face flushed, and Mr. Cerras said:

"I heard that the piece of gold, an eagle, was bent double, and the bullet was caught in it."

"Is that true?"

"I could not tell you, señor, as I never looked at it," remarked the Don.

"Yes, such is the case, for I have seen it."

"The bullet struck it squarely in the center, bulged the gold out on the other side, and doubled the gold over it, like a half-closed umbrella, catching the lead in it."

"It was a marvelous shot, Don Benzota."

The Don bowed, and the two guests accompanied their host, at his invitation, to visit the vessel he was having built.

The work was progressing rapidly, for the yard was full of men, and not an hour was being lost between dawn and darkness.

So perfect were the plans of all kinds put in the builders' hands by the Sea Gipsy, that the rigging and spar were being made ready as fast as was the hull, and the Don was promised his vessel within a month from that visit.

The battery had already arrived, two splendid pivot guns, forty-twos, to mount fore and aft, and eight broadside guns, eighteens, making a most formidable armament.

The battery was mounted upon a dummy deck, and the crew were being daily drilled in their duties under efficient officers of the United States Navy, who, through some influence, the Don had managed to get appointed to his vessel for a special cruise.

In fact it was rumored that, though the Don was a Mexican, he meant to go on some special service for the United States Government.

What that service was no one could conjecture, and Don Benzota knew how to keep a secret.

About this time rumors began to come in that a red-handed pirate was running riot in the Gulf.

Some said that he had a fleet of half a dozen vessels, others that there were three, and a few asserted that one craft was doing all the damage.

No one could tell more about him than that he was certainly doing great damage and was a merciless fiend.

The skippers of merchant vessels dared not go to sea, until it became known that the splendid brig-of-war Sentinel, under the gallant Captain Danforth had been especially ordered to hunt down the reckless buccaneers, and then confidence was regained and all felt that the career of the Pirate King, as many said he called himself, would be short-lived.

And through all the rumors the Don went on in the even tenor of his way.

He lived in the same luxurious style, gave weekly entertainments at the hotel, drove or rode out daily, and kept his yacht over on the lake, and was wont to give pleasant sailing-parties of a day.

He seemed to admire Toinette Vallour immensely, but he by no means devoted himself to her, and they appeared to be the best of friends.

As to who he was, other than his name on the hotel register told, no one knew.

He never spoke of the past, and seldom of himself, and was to all an unfathomable mystery.

People knew that he was having a vessel of-war built, but more than that they did not know.

So one day all the town were amazed to find that the schooner of the Don had sailed quietly during the night, and that he went in command of her.

A captain of a packet ship coming in, had reported passing the schooner in a light breeze off the Balize, and he said he had never seen so beautiful a vessel.

The Don he had seen in the city, and recognized him on the quarter-deck, and the vessel seemed in perfect trim.

Atherpeak, he reported, she carried the Stars and Stripes and at the fore the private colors of the Don, evidently.

He had observed them well—a blue field, and in the corners respectively, a pair of crossed swords, a sea-shell, a crescent, and an anchor, the two former in gold, the last two in silver embroidery.

In the center of the blue field was a red cat-o'-nine-tails whip.

Such was the strange flag that floated at the fore of the Don's vessel, and the captain had noticed, for he was very near to the schooner, in gilt letters upon her stern the name of the beautiful cruiser.

"And what was it?" asked one to whom the captain was speaking.

"The Nemesis," was the reply.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ZAMPA'S POWER.

It will be remembered that Lindo, driven to desperation by his superstitious dread of the specters of the Gipsies' Island, had his people change their dwellings to an island of the Bahamas.

There he hoped he would be able to put into port and be free from those haunting specters.

He was aware, from the story of Vidal and others, that his brother's ghost also haunted the old island, but he hoped they would not follow him to his new resting-place, and he did not believe that they would do so.

But vain the hope, for, while seated upon the cliff with Zampa, he had seen not only Carriza's ghost, but that of his brother Kosta.

He had hastily put to sea, to behold, as he sailed away and glanced up at the cliff, the two white-robed forms standing there in the light of the rising moon, waving their arms to him as with awful warning.

Had he but known about those "ghosts," heads would have fallen in Gipsy town.

After leaving the king on board his ship, Zampa had returned rapidly to the cliff, and when the "ghosts" turned away from their farewell warnings to Lindo he confronted them.

"You played your parts well, Yampal and Carriza, and he will never come here any more."

"Now, Yampal, free yourself of your ghostly garments, and you, too, Carriza, for none of our people must see you here, though the crews may report what they please about doing so when they return."

"Vail yourself, Carriza, and go home as quickly and secretly as possible."

After a short delay the brother and sister departed from the cliff, and, without being seen, Carriza was soon safe in the little temporary structure her parents put up until their cabin could be built.

The truth was that when Zampa was told by Vidal that the king had ordered the removal of the Sea Gipsies to the Bahamas, he was in a deep quandary and knew not what to do with Carriza.

So he went to her parents and told the secret, and they were overjoyed, though fearful that he had broken a Gipsy law.

He promised to stand by what he had done, and so Carriza was smuggled on board of Zampa's vessel, and thus brought, with her brother and parents, to the new island home.

There, in a box, she had been borne up to the little shelter on the hill, which was apart from the others, and had, with Yampal, given Lindo another tremendous scare as ghosts.

Like beavers the Sea Gipsies worked in their new home, and then the power of Zampa became felt.

He pointed out to them that it was wrong, and might cause their ruin, to have a large vessel-of-war find there a vessel that had been taken as a pirate prize, and urged that they be broken up and used in building their homes.

This was done, and every vestige of the piracies of Lindo were thus put out of sight, while the Sea Gipsies had no fear of their own little vessels, if seen.

The Gipsy village soon took good shape, and with their gardens, flocks and pleasant houses, the strange people soon felt as comfortable as in their old abiding-place.

With no "ghosts" to haunt them there their spirits rose, and the common-sense teachings of Zampa, Yampal and the father of Carriza began to be felt.

In a short cruise he had made in his vessel with Yampal and his father, Zampa had taken Carriza to a small seaport, where she could dwell until Kosta struck his blow against Lindo and his pirates, and become the King of the Sea Gipsies.

Thus matters stood when Ramon came into port one day, bringing with him half-a-dozen prizes.

The booty was most valuable, and he reported that Lindo had become like a madman in his thirst for blood, until his crews were forced to spare prisoners taken, when they could do so, and send them secretly away.

"We are going upon a cruise around the Gulf now, and may not return for months," he said, as he boarded his vessel to again rejoin Lindo and Vidal at an appointed place of rendezvous.

Holding full sway now over the Council of Twelve, who yielded to him readily, Zampa at once had the booty distributed among all and the prize vessels broken up, that not a trace of the piratical deeds of their king might be found.

Then he congratulated himself that before long Kosta would certainly end the career of Lindo, and until the blow was struck he could but wait and hope.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE NEMESIS.

WHEN the Sentinel set sail in search of the pirates, who were doing such red-handed work in Southern waters, Captain Danforth congratulated himself upon the prospect of making a great name.

The Sentinel was a very fleet craft.

She was in perfect condition, and had her full complement of men.

Her battery was a powerful one, and she was in perfect fighting trim, so why should not the Sentinel run down and capture the pirates, be they ever so terrible.

From vessels met at sea Captain Danforth learned about where he would find the pirates, and he also heard that there were several of the outlaw vessels keeping together for their better protection.

After a cruise of some ten days a sail was sighted from the maintop of the Sentinel one morning, and Captain Danforth asked the usual question:

"Whereaway?"

"Dead ahead, sir."

"What do you make her out?"

"A schooner, sir."

Lieutenant Reddington took his glass and went aloft.

The brig was only a few leagues away from the Balize; and coming out from in-shore, he saw the strange sail.

"Ho, the deck!"

"Ay, ay!"

"She is a schooner, sir, quite large, and, from her rig, is armed."

"I will soon see her decks."

In a short while more came the cry

"Sail, ho!"

"Ay, ay!"

"A second vessel, strangely like the first one, sir, is coming out from the land," called down Reddington.

"Ay, ay; watch them close, Reddington, for they must be one fleet."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Then a short while passed and once more came:

"Sail, ho!"

"Whereaway?"

"In the wake of the other two, sir."

"A schooner?"

"Yes, sir."

"Our pirates, I guess; but can you see the deck of the first?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"She is armed!"

"Then they are our game."

"How do they head, Reddington?"

"They are standing out toward us, sir."

"They'll catch a Tartar this time."

"Come down, and we'll make ready for the ball."

The lieutenant descended from aloft, and all was at once deep interest on board the Sentinel.

The guns were looked over, the small-arms gotten ready, the magazine opened, and the men went to quarters without an order to do so.

The three schooners were now distinctly visible, the first not more than four miles away.

They were heading toward the brig, one in the wake of the other, and about a mile apart.

The wind was blowing about ten knots, the sea was comparatively smooth, and the prospects of a grand battle loomed up.

The three schooners were certainly anxious for a fight, and the largest one was very nearly the size of the brig, and they seemed to carry a heavy armament.

But Danforth was no man to retire in the face of a foe, and he meant to fight.

As the first schooner got within range, the Sentinel ran up the Stars and Stripes and sent a shot flying over the enemy.

Instantly up to the peak of the three schooners went the black field, with the silver crescent in the center, and they fired a shot of defiance at the same time.

"That pirate means to fight."

"He isn't looking for merchant craft," said Fred Lucas gayly.

The brig now gave the leading schooner a broadside at long range, and the unequal combat was begun.

The schooners at once opened also, and in a short while the Sentinel's officers saw that they had their hands full.

Fiercer and fiercer waged the fight, as the vessels drew nearer to each other, and the brig was handled in a masterly manner and her crew fought nobly.

The schooners were also handled superbly, and they got positions where they could take turns in raking the brig, when she was moving to give her broadsides.

"We are getting the worst of this, Reddington," said Danforth, his manliness now shining out in all its grandeur.

And he added:

"I shall never surrender to a pirate."

"I'll let them sink me first."

"So say I, sir," was the gallant response.

"Sail, ho!"

It was Ferd Lucas who uttered the cry, and, in the midst of their action each man bent his eyes landward upon the strange sail.

Was it another of the pirate fleet?

It looked so, and the brave crew felt that there was no hope for them.

But still they fought on. The stranger was under a cloud of canvas, fairly rushing to the scene of combat.

She was just like the other schooner, though she looked a trifle longer and seemed to carry more sail.

Just as she was sighted a shot came from her bows, sent directly at the largest of the pirate schooners, and up to her fore went a strange flag, up to her peak the Stars and Stripes.

"By the Lord Harry! she is our friend!" cried Reddington.

And at his words the crew burst forth in a wild cheer.

As he did so, there came a terrific broadside from the larger pirate, and the mainmast of the Sentinel went down, carrying the foretopmast with it.

At the same moment Leo Danforth sunk to the deck with a groan.

"It's my death-wound, Reddington, but don't surrender the brig to a pirate," he said.

"I will never do so, sir," was the stern reply, and the young lieutenant had his captain borne into the cabin.

The pirates, gloating over their work, had but a short-lived joy, for a broadside from the stranger wrecked one of their schooners and set her on fire.

Then the coward spirit of Lindo, who saw the stranger heading for him, showed itself, and feeling that he had a new foe to fight, one yet unharmed, and with one of his vessels lost, he at

once set sail in flight, signaling to Vidal to do the same.

"Can we save Ramon and his men?" signaled Vidal.

The answer came back:

"No! fly! and fight off that cruiser as you fly."

On board the brig Reddington sent shots after the flying corsairs, while the crew cheered the strange cruiser that was in swift pursuit.

"Men, we can do no more harm."

"Let us save human life."

"Lower away the boats and aid those poor devils," cried Reddington, pointing to the burning schooner.

But as he uttered the words a volcano of red flame shot up from her decks, and the beautiful craft was blown into atoms.

Appalled by the sight, Lindo stood on his deck crowding all sail to escape the pursuer upon his track, and which pursuer was overhauling the fleet Gipsy schooners rapidly.

The face of the haunted, desperate man writhed with passion and fear.

He seemed to see his doom before him, as the supposed specter of Carriza that night in his cottage had pictured it.

She had warned him and he had heeded not the warning.

He had dreaded the unearthly, then, more than the earthly, and now the gallows loomed up before him in all its appalling horror.

"I will die fighting! I will not surrender!"

He fairly shrieked the words, and seeing that the stranger would overhaul him, he hailed Vidal and bade him fight to the death.

Then the two Gipsy schooners went about to meet their daring foe.

He was but one, and about the size of Lindo's vessel.

They were two, and desperate.

And so the fearful sea duel began, and from the decks of the brig, afar off, and rigging a jurymast, to come to the rescue, it was watched with breathless interest.

But Kosta fought the Nemesis, and his crew never threw away a shot.

They copied after their stern, cool commander, and every shot told.

Nearer and nearer came the Nemesis, and at last she was within hail.

Like a trumpet rung out the words from Kosta's lips:

"Ahoy the Wind-Chaser!"

"Ahoy the schooner! I will not surrender!" shouted back Lindo, now mad with rage and fear.

"Do you see yonder flag at the fore?"

"It is my flag!"

"It means no mercy to you and those who fight under you."

"Behold, traitor Sea Gipsy, false brother! I am Kosta, thy Nemesis!"

As he spoke Kosta sprung up into the ratlines and was plainly revealed to all.

A shriek arose from the lips of Lindo, and those about him saw that he had become a madman.

But they fought on, the Sea Gipsies did, and the crew of the Nemesis also fought on.

Wounds were given and received; but the Sea Gipsies were getting the worst of it by far, and their vessels were going down rapidly.

But there was no cry for mercy, and the mad Sea Gipsy King fought like a demon.

At length the Sea Cloud went down bow first under a terrific broadside from the Nemesis, and through the caldron of waters left by her, and among those of her crew who were struggling in the sea, swept the avenging craft to pour its whole fire now upon the Wind-Chaser.

At close quarters they fought, neither vessel seeming to wish to board, and the pirate, under the fearful fire of the Nemesis, was a mere wreck and rapidly sinking.

A few more terrific broadsides and the end came, for with wild cries the Sea Gipsy Corsairs saw their fine vessel go down, while from the lips of their mad king came bursts of demoniacal laughter.

Right over where she sunk steered the Nemesis, her white-faced commander now at the helm, and then she headed back to the brig, who was slowly coming toward the scene.

"Shall we not pick up some of the drowning wretches, sir, with our boats?"

So asked an officer of the Nemesis of Kosta.

"No, better that they meet death by drowning than on the gallows."

"Let them perish, and thus wipe out the last one of the pirate crew," was the stern response.

CHAPTER XL.

KING ZAMPA.

WHEN he drew near the brig Kosta ordered his vessel brought to, and a boat being lowered, at once went on board the Sentinel.

"It is the Don!" cried Ferd Lucas, who was nursing a wounded arm.

"You are right, Ferd, and that fight was just such as I expected from such a man."

"He wiped them off of the face of the deep, and we owe our safety to him," replied Reddington, and he met the Don at the gangway, while a wild cheer of welcome burst forth from the crew in his honor.

He raised his hat politely, grasped Reddington's hand and said quickly:

"Your captain?"

"Is dying."

"Poor fellow; may I see him?"

"Certainly."

The lieutenant led the way, the Don greeting the officers pleasantly as he went along.

Leo Danforth lay upon the cabin floor, propped up with pillows, and he was very near his end.

He grasped the hand of the Don and said:

"I am dying."

"Alas! I fear so; but let me tell you now that you were right in your recognition of me, though not that I had deserted your ship."

"I am no deserter, sir, but one who was wronged bitterly by the pirate chief I have just sunk with all his crew."

"It was he who had me lashed until my back was gashed and bleeding, and I had escaped from him when I boarded your vessel, for, from a small island where I had taken refuge, I saw your danger."

"That I did not tell you all was for reasons of my own."

"Now let me drop self and tell you that you made a noble fight, and die with honor, for die you must."

"God bless you," murmured the dying man, and they were the last words he uttered.

Back to the port of New Orleans went the crippled brig, to report the victory, while the Don sailed for the new retreat of the Sea Gipsies, for Carriza had written him a letter from the port where she was staying, telling him that the change had been made.

At that port the Nemesis first touched, and Carriza was taken as a passenger from there to the Gipsies' Island.

A signal from the schooner brought Zampa off in a boat, and the story was told of the fate of Lindo and his men.

Then, in different attire, Kosta went ashore in Zampa's boat, Carriza accompanying them closely veiled.

It was a scene of wild joy when Kosta was recognized, and calling his people together he told them that Lindo and his two captains had had an engagement with two American men-of-war, and that the three pirate schooners, with all on board, had gone to the bottom of the sea.

"I did not die, as was believed by you all, but escaped in that fearful tempest, and to punish my brother, a false Sea Gipsy, were the apparitions shown of Carriza and myself."

"Nor is Carriza dead, for she has returned with me to her people."

"I am now your king, and I would ask you if there is one disputing voice?"

A wild shout of joy was the answer, and Kosta continued:

"Were it known that you had encouraged Lindo in his piracy, and were the receivers of booty and prizes, your homes would be destroyed, your men sent to prison."

"So keep the dark secret in your bosoms, and lead honest lives."

"As my path in life has led in a different way, I will leave you, and Kosta must be forgotten."

"But, I hold the Gipsy right to name your king."

"He is here!"

"Long live Zampa the Gipsy Sea King, and Carriza, your Queen!"

In the confusion that followed Kosta bade a hasty farewell to Zampa and those about him, and was hastily rowed out to his vessel by Yampal.

And thus, kind reader, was one of the West India Islands settled, and the descendants of Zampa and his people dwell there to-day.

CONCLUSION.

DON BENZOTA found himself a great hero upon his return to the Crescent City, for the officers and crew of the Sentinel had told of his glorious victory; but Reddington had only divulged to Ferd Lucas the scene in the cabin with the dying Danforth.

The secret came out that the Don had built a vessel at his own expense, to be allowed by the United States Government to hunt down the Gulf buccaneers, and for his triumph he was offered a commission in the navy.

But he declined it, preferring to settle down and marry Toinette Vallour, to whom he told his love.

Nay, more, he rode out with her one day on horseback to the shell monument over his mother's grave, and there told her the whole secret of his life, showing her his father's letter, and asked her if she could love him, a Sea Gipsy.

She already loved him, and knowing him as the one who had rescued her that night, she could give but one answer.

And soon after they were married, Toinette Vallour to Victor Benzota; but they never revealed the secret of Kosta's life, and only by finding an old diary of the Sea Gipsy's did I discover the strange mystery upon which this romance is founded.

THE END.

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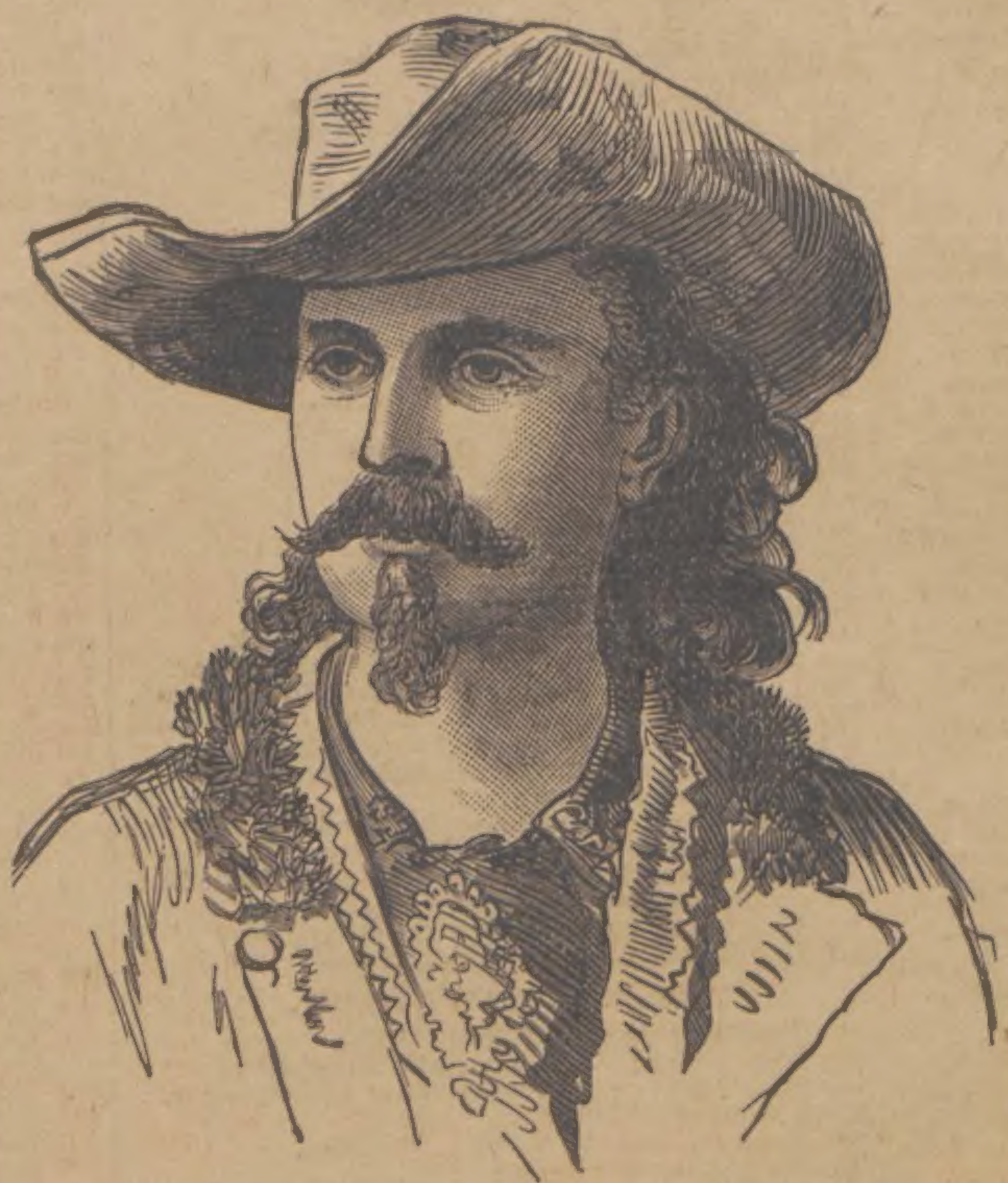
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